METRO / A21

Gov't offers P1M for info on killers of Assistant SolGen Ballocillo, son

BUSINESS / B1

PNOC-EDC shares jump 42% in biggest RP initial public offering this year

LIFESTYLE / C1

Fr. Blanco's garden moves indoor to an Intramuros resto filled with flora, fauna

NEWS / A7

Peso hits P49.425 to $1, strongest finish in 4 1/2 years due to OFWs

Cebu lawmaker says sorry for Cha-cha stand

WRONG-MALI TALAGA!

By Jhunnex Napallacan
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—SHADES of President Macapagal-Arroyo making a public apology for speaking to an elections

CEBU/ A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
day, December 14, 2006 ★★ 5
8 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 6 P18 website: inquirer.net

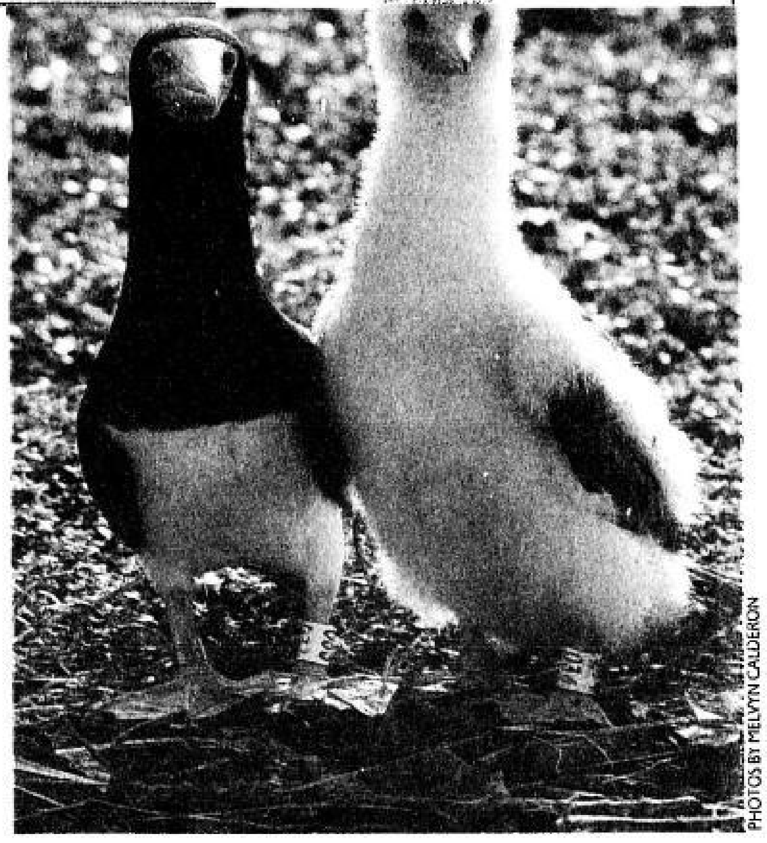
Now it's 3 golds; Tipon outpoints Korean boxer

By Ted S. Melendres
Sports Editor

DOHA, QATAR—ARMED WITH a wicked right straight, bantamweight Joan Tipon piled up the points early to whip South Korea's Han Soon-chul, 21-10, last night and win the Philippines' third gold medal at the 15th Asian Games.

NOW/ A4

BIRDLAND ACCLAIMED worldwide as a vital sanctuary for our feathered friends, the Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park and World Heritage Site lies in the Sulu Sea, southeast of Puerto Princesa City. (Left) It's playtime for an exuberance of Booby seabirds. (Right) Like the movie "Happy Feet," a still of mother and child is a visual feast. (*Story on Page A10*)



PHOTOS BY MELVYN CALDERON

Judge junks US demand

Smith stays in jail; RP sovereignty cited

By Tarra V. Quismundo

ASSERTING NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, THE FILipino judge who had earlier convicted an American Marine of raping a Filipino woman dismissed yesterday the soldier's request to be returned to US custody.

In dismissing for "lack of merit" Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith's request to be returned to the US Embassy until final judgment on his conviction—an appeal that invoked legal protection under Article 5, Paragraph 6 of the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA)—Judge Benjamin Pozon ended days of waiting for his decision on the contentious custody issue.

The decision means that Smith, 21, will be indefinitely held at the Makati City Jail (MCJ) as he appeals his conviction.

If Smith were returned to US custody, "the Philippines would have no jurisdiction over the facilities run by the United States/US Embassy/US military authorities and the Philippine courts would be deprived of its duty of supervision over the detention of the convicted accused under Philippine laws," ruled Pozon, the presiding judge of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 139.

He said Smith would stay at the MCJ "until the appropriate Philippine and United States authorities shall have come to a binding agreement as to the proper facilities where [he] should carry out his confinement or detention during his appeal and until further orders from this court."

In his appeal filed on Dec. 5, or a day after his conviction, Smith told the court that per Article 5, Paragraph 6 of the VFA, he should remain under the custody of US military authorities at the embassy until the end of all judicial proceedings, including the appeal.

But in interpreting the VFA provisions for the first time in the lower court, Pozon ruled that "the

JUDGE JUNKS/ A8

POWER-PACKED LADY. Army Cpl. Janet Ang takes her position behind a multiple grenade launcher mounted on a Simba Armored Personnel Carrier during a camp defense drill at Camp Aguinaldo. The troops are mobilized to test their readiness in defending Army headquarters in case of emergencies such as the Dec. 17 rally no matter if it's billed as a "watch and pray" rally. JOAN BONDOC

Al-Qaida plot in Cebu bared

By Jim Gomez
Associated Press

SECURITY FORCES TRIED TO disrupt plots by al-Qaida-linked militants to stage attacks but failed to track them, setting off an alarm that influenced a decision to postpone a pair of Asian summits this week in Cebu City, officials said yesterday.

The plots may have included a possible car bomb attack in a key city to embarrass the Philippine government during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit and the East Asian summit in Cebu province, a security official told The Associated Press.

The Philippine government has been forced to defend its decision to postpone the summits, citing a looming typhoon. The meetings had been scheduled for this week.

The Cambodian prime minister

AL-QAIDA PLOT/ A8

Senators to attend Sunday prayer rally

By TJ Burgonio, Christian V. Esguerra and Inquirer Visayas

SENATORS WILL BE JOINING former President Corazon C. Aquino at the prayer rally in Manila on Sunday called by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and supported by El Shaddai, Iglesia ni Cristo, Jesus is Lord Movement, and civil society groups.

The rally against Charter change will be preceded tomorrow by the Church-led rallies across the country even if administration lawmakers appeared to have relaxed their position on overhauling the 1987 Constitution.

Senators Franklin Drilon, Manuel Roxas II and Ramon Magsaysay Jr. and their colleagues from the opposition, Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., Senators Panfilo Lacson, Alfredo Lim, Luisa "Loi" Ejercito-Estrada, and Jinggoy Estrada, among others, said they were

SENATORS/ A8

Mercy mission started with GMA vow to old lady

By Juan Escandor Jr. and Ephraim Aguilar
Inquirer Southern Luzon

PILI, CAMARINES SUR—A RELIEF CARavan of 270 vehicles, moved by President Macapagal-Arroyo's promise of help to an old woman and other victims of Supertyphoon "Reming," arrived here amid cheers from residents yesterday morning.

But the bulk of the convoy of Malacañang's "Mayon Mercy Mission" proceeded to Legazpi City in Albay, which suffered the brunt of Reming among the Bicol provinces, after a brief ceremony to turn over a P15-million calamity assistance from the President to Camarines

MERCY/ A6

RYAN LIM

SUN SHINES BRIGHTLY ON PDI: The Inquirer bags eight awards—the most number for a print medium—at the 2006 Araw Values Advertising Awards on Monday. From left, Micky Domingo, McCann's VP/executive director, Sandy Prieto-Romualdez, PDI president/CEO, and Connie Kalagayan, head of corporate affairs. The Araw awards honor the most outstanding works in the advertising industry that help promote and communicate Filipino values.

PNP chief to politicos, actors: Don't go on stage or else . . .

By Alcuin Papa

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP) warned yesterday that no movie stars or politicians would be allowed to mount the stage during the Dec. 17 anti-Charter change rally at the Luneta or they would be arrested.

In a press conference at Camp Crame, PNP Chief Director General Oscar Calderon said they would not allow the rally, expected to draw half a million protesters, to turn into a political gathering.

"We are expecting a mammoth crowd because this is the first time that all the religious groups are joining together," said Reynaldo Varilla of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO). (*Story above.*)

Varilla said that while they recognized the rally's organizers were in charge, they would not allow politicians and movie stars to mount the stage on Sunday.

"There will be no political speeches and no movie personalities onstage. The organizers will run the show. If they (movie stars and politicos) will insist and things get messy, we will do our thing and arrest them as per request of the organizers," Varilla told reporters.

Varilla pointed out that the Erap forces will be bannered by movie stars like Rez Cortez.

Calderon also warned policemen from actually joining the Luneta demonstration. "We have told them that if they want to observe their religious activities, since the rally would be a Sunday, we told them to go to churches instead. We have to account for all our policemen.

PNP CHIEF/ A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2006

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon will be cloudy with scattered rainshowers while the eastern section of Visayas and Mindanao will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms.

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/12/13/06 SOURCE: PAGASA

Second FRONTPAGE

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Text us your feedback: inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	**Roxas**	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	**Cebu**	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	**Tacloban**	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	**Gen. Santos**	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	**Zamboanga**	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	**Cagayan de Oro**	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	**Davao**	Cloudy with Rains

Approval of P1-trillion budget seen

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE GOVERNMENT WILL FInally be able to operate on a trillion-peso budget in the New Year, Albay Rep. Joey Salceda confidently said yesterday.

President Macapagal-Arroyo's economic adviser and de facto emissary to the Senate believes that the Dec. 22 deadline is achievable, going by how the bicameral conference committee has been tackling the proposed P1.126-trillion budget for 2007.

Salceda, the House appropriations committee chair, said the only issue left to be threshed out is the 2 percent in the proposed budgetary allocations that the Senate had trashed.

"We agreed to tackle it for last since we could agree on the 98 percent, so the Dec. 22 stands as a deadline," Salceda said.

The bicam will meet next Tuesday, three days before Congress adjourns for the holidays. But Salceda said he and his Senate counterpart, Sen. Franklin Drilon, would be able to "thresh out the details" and present the final version to the panel for concurrence.

The President yesterday appealed to lawmakers to restore the cuts that were made during the two chambers' separate deliberations.

"We seek the reconsideration of our lawmakers of revisions on the original version of the General Appropriations Act. This budget will further increase the momentum of the economy and the flow of services down to the people, including those in the typhoon-stricken areas," said the President in a statement.

She did not identify what items she wanted to restore.

Meanwhile, Malacañang has approved the release of the Christmas bonus of government employees this year.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the President signed Administrative Order 164 granting a P6,000 cash gift to all government employees—both regular and casual employees who have rendered at least four months' service—starting Dec. 15.

Ermita said the cash bonus this year would be 20 percent higher than the P5,000 granted last year, noting that the government was able to boost its savings by keeping within its spending targets.

Prepared to OK

Salceda said the two chambers were prepared to approve a budget that "hews closely, almost 98 percent" to the one proposed by Malacañang.

But he said Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya apparently has some new inputs on the budget "on account of emerging imperatives" that he would present to the panel on Tuesday.

"The House of Representatives is always responsive to the President's priorities and awaits the presentation of Andaya," he said.

Salceda explained that the 2 percent that remained in contention was the P4 billion to P5 billion budget for the Department of Education and P1 billion food-for-school program under the Department of Social Welfare which the Senate "demolished but is a subject of bicam negotiation."

Both House and Senate panels in the bicam reached a major breakthrough on the first day of their meeting last Tuesday when they unanimously agreed to delete the P8.2-billion in programmed funds that the House had allegedly inserted in its version.

Salceda said that agreeing to let go of the P8.2 billion ensured smooth bicam negotiations since the Senate had adamantly insisted that the allegedly inserted funds would cause a deadlock.

Concurring with Drilon, Salceda agreed with the Senate version pegging the ceiling on the programmed appropriations at P573.912, P8.2 billion less than the programmed funds in the House version.

"We agreed to approve it before Dec. 22. It took all of 8 minutes," he said.

Speaker Jose de Venecia similarly expressed optimism about the Dec. 22 deadline, telling reporters the other day that the House, excepting the constituent assembly resolution, had not calendared any bill but the 2007 General Appropriations Act.

"We expect to ratify the bicam version before we go on a yuletide break on Dec. 22," he said.

Pinay's conviction over stolen pictures sparks outrage in HK

By Smiley D. Julve

HONG KONG—SOME MEMBERS OF the Filipino community in Hong Kong have expressed anger and shock over the jailing for six months of a Filipina domestic helper found guilty of stealing one business letter and three photographs of her employer, pop star Jacky Cheung Hok-yau.

Cynthia Tellez, director of the Mission for Filipino Migrant Workers, said the punishment was "very cruel" as the case had already cost the helper, Preslyn-saga Catacutan her job.

"If an offense was indeed committed, it was so petty as to have merited such a punishment," said Tellez.

She also wondered whether Cheung was not only after the publicity generated by his filing of the case against his maid.

This was the same question raised by writer Isabel Escoda, who said in a letter sent to the South China Morning Post: "Was it really necessary for pop star Jacky Cheung Hok-yau to take his maid to court over some purloined photos? Shouldn't he have felt flattered to have a Filipino fan and just settled the matter privately, perhaps generously giving her one of his studio photos?"

'What great courage?'

Escoda also scored the Eastern law court magistrate, Winston Leung, for saying publicly that Cheung showed "great courage" when he testified in court.

"Pray, what danger to his life was Cheung facing from his domestic? Did he think that her taking the photos suggested she was an ax murderer?," Escoda asked.

Catacutan, 30, was immediately jailed after the sentencing. Her plea for bail pending an appeal was rejected.

In her defense, Catacutan told the court that she got Cheung's pictures as a souvenir, but her claim was not given credence by the magistrate.

"I kept it as a souvenir because my employer is a famous celebrity in Hong Kong," said Catacutan regarding the photographs she took. "I thought that even if I didn't ask for permission, it will be OK with my employer."

According to the defense counsel, even if no consent was given, Cheung "made the defendant feel and believe that the photos are hers."

But the court rejected this argument, saying Catacutan had no reason to believe that she was given consent to take the pictures, or even be friends with Cheung because of her domestic helper status and the fact that she had served his family for barely two months.

No fan

The magistrate added that Catacutan is also "not wholeheartedly a fan" for reasons that she didn't nicely keep the photos when she folded them to fit her jeans pocket. She also doesn't have CDs or DVDs of Cheung.

"She must have collected them with the commercial value in mind," said the magistrate. He said that she had also tampered with Cheung's computer and eavesdropped on his conversations which made her a "spy in Cheung's household."

The magistrate noted that, "(Catacutan's) conduct is all the more serious in that she had the intention of selling her employer's pictures for money."

"Celebrities in court are prone to such betrayal and they are equally entitled to be protected by the court. Their celebrity status must be protected from abuse by servants. Deterrence must be harsher," said the magistrate.

The court heard that Catacutan stole the pictures and letters between June and August inside Cheung's Repulse Bay residence while the house was undergoing renovation and the family was residing elsewhere.

She took one photo of Cheung and another of him and his wife, which Catacutan said she found lying on the floor inside the master's bedroom. But the magistrate said that it was a servant's duty to pick things up or tidy them, and not take them.

The magistrate did not believe Catacutan when she said that she found the pictures on the floor, but believed Cheung who said he and his wife kept their pictures inside zip lock bags inside their bedroom.

One man's trash

The defense counsel submitted that the passport photo could not have been stolen as its ownership had been given up.

However, the magistrate said the trash was meant to be collected by scavengers, and not servants, and should therefore have been destroyed. The court also noted that Cheung's wife was not at the house at the time Catacutan found her photo in the bin.

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GMA OKs amnesty for loose guns

IN A BID TO CRACK DOWN ON crime, President Macapagal-Arroyo has ordered a new amnesty program to allow owners of unlicensed firearms to surrender their illegal weapons.

The President yesterday signed Executive Order No. 585 providing for the surrender and licensing of loose firearms over the next 12 months.

The government has set a P3,000 amnesty fee for high-powered firearms and P2,000 for low-powered firearms.

The President noted that her initial amnesty program for loose firearms three years ago covered a very "limited period" that was not enough for all illegal firearm owners to apply for licenses.

In the EO, the President ordered the maximization of the firearm ballistic data bank in order to establish a comprehensive gun owners data bank.

The EO has allocated 20 percent of the collected fees to the Firearms and Explosives Division, Civil Society Group, and regional and city offices of the Philippine National Police with the balance to go to improving the Firearms Information Management System, Firearms Records Management System and Firearms Ballistic Information System.

While the government as a general rule does not license high-powered firearms, the new EO allows the PNP chief to grant exemptions and give permits to qualified owners of high-powered guns. *Gil Cabacungan Jr.*

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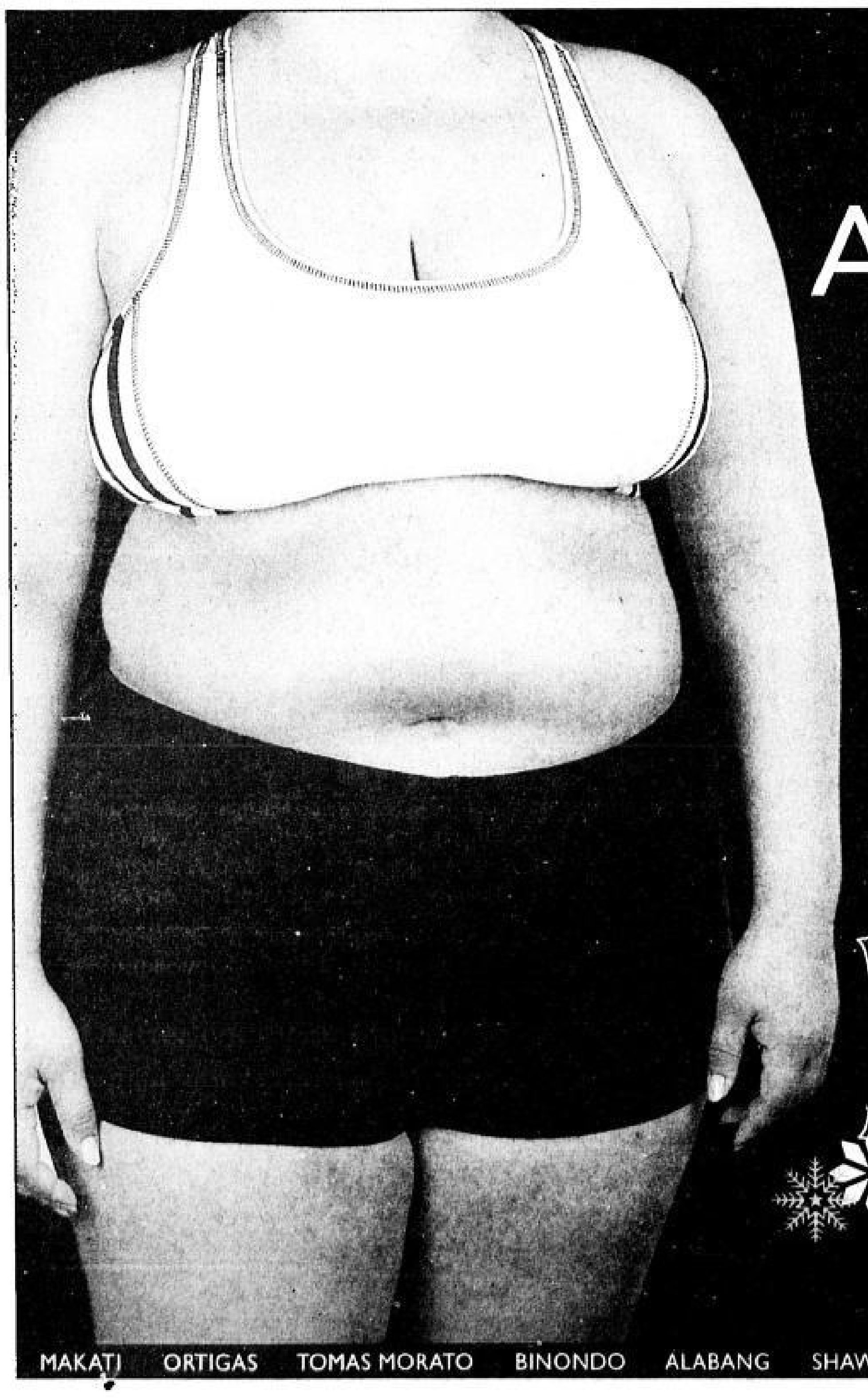

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PAASI

Now it's 3 golds; Tipon outpoints Korean boxer

From page A1

Tipon's triumph came less than 24 hours after karateka Ma. Marna Pabillore settled for the silver in the women's -53 kilogram kumite after bowing to Japanese world champion Tomoko Araga.

The 24-year-old Tipon set the tone of the match by scoring the first point and engaging the taller, awkward-fighting Korean in long-range exchanges as he picked off points on counter punches.

The second Filipino boxer to nail an Asiad gold after flyweight Violito Payla, Tipon took all rounds by scores of 6-2, 6-3, 4-3 and 5-2. He repeated over the same fighter whom he beat on points in the 2005 Asian Boxing Championships in Vietnam.

"*Alam ko na ang kartada niya kaya hindi siya maka-puntos* (I know how he fights, that's why he could not score)," said a jubilant Tipon in the dugout, as RP boxing coaches led by Patricio Gaspi celebrated the victory with bear hugs and high fives.

"*Malaking karangalan sa akin at sa Pilipinas ito. Nagpapasalamat ako sa suporta at dasal ninyo* (This is a great honor for me and the Philippines. I thank everyone for your support and prayers)," he added.

Antonio Gabica won the RP contingent's first gold in billiards' 9-ball event on Monday night.

Tipon said the fight with Thailand's Worapoj Petchkoom, whom he bested in the semifinals, was harder than his final match.

"I came in relaxed for this match," he said. "I watched the Korean boxer's video five times and studied his techniques."

Next goal: a Beijing gold

The fighter from Cagayan de Oro City was elated that he stands to win P1.5 million in incentives.

"I'm going to get P1.5 million. With that money, I will buy a house and spend the rest in business."

Like Payla, who upset the heavily favored Somjit Jongjohor in the flyweight finals Tuesday, Tipon said he would not turn professional and instead focus on the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

"I don't want to move into professional boxing," he said. "I have set my sights on getting a gold in the Olympics."

Tipon tagged the Korean with a right straight that was set up by a jab to move up, 5-2, and closed the first at 6-2 with a right hook that caught Han in the kisser.

So desperate was Han to catch up in the second round that he hounded Tipon across the ring and pushed the Filipino to the ropes after getting hit by another right straight. A right-left combination by Tipon pegged the score after the second round at 12-5.

All the right moves

The 26-year-old Pabillore fought with the ferocity she displayed in besting three other foes earlier, but fell short against the favored Japanese.

A confident Araga did all the right moves and scored with impunity in the first real exchange of the fight to beat the 26-year-old from Cagayan de Oro, 9-1, for the gold.

Pabillore, who belongs to a family of karatekas (her sister Victoria is also a member of the national pool) that runs a karate school, said she could have done better but was happy with the silver, the country's fifth in the 45-nation Games.

Gabica also took the silver in 8-ball, Jeffrey de Luna in 9-ball, Marie Antoinette Rivero in taekwondo's 67-kilogram class and Thsomlee Go in the 62 kg division, also in taekwondo.

Aside from the three gold and five silver, the Philippines has also amassed nine bronze medals for 17th place in the medal standings with only a day left in the Games.

Very tough

"Araga was very tough but I knew I could beat her," Pabillore said. "I will prepare next time so that if we meet again I can do better. I will continue practicing to improve my game."

Her coach, the multititled internationalist David Lay, was happy that Pabillore's three-month training in Italy bore fruit.

Pabillore downed North Korea's Ha Ryon-bok, 7-1, and Kazakhstan's Venera Zhetibay, 3-1, to reach the semifinals, where she bested Malaysia's Lim Lee Lee, 3-1, to forge the gold medal match with Araga.

Cebu lawmaker says sorry for Cha-cha stand

From page A1

official during the May 2004 election period.

Rep. Antonio Cuenco of Cebu City's south district yesterday apologized to his constituents for going along with the House majority's no-holds-barred—but ill-starred—push to convene a constituent assembly (Con-ass) as a mode of Charter change (Cha-cha).

"I'm sorry for the mistake we made," Cuenco said in a radio interview.

He said he had always preferred Charter change through a constitutional convention (Con-con) but had to support Con-ass because he was hewing to the party stand of the ruling Lakas.

Mea culpa

"It was a mistake; we have to admit our mistakes. It was a blunder and we have to correct the mistake. No matter how we would try to argue our way out of what we have done, the House made a mistake," he said.

Cuenco declined to say why he thought the House majority's action was a mistake, but said he and his colleagues could "correct" it by publicly apologizing for what they had done.

"Mea culpa … mea culpa," he said.

Cuenco also admitted that the House majority abandoned the Con-ass plan because of the strong public opinion against it.

"The people have correctly spoken, and we yield to the voice of the people," he said.

But Cebu Archdiocese media liaison officer Msgr. Achilles Dakay said that while the apology was an act of humility, Cuenco should explain his and his colleagues' action.

He said Cuenco's justification for backing a Con-ass was "an insult to [the lawmaker's] integrity."

"It's not good to hear a congressman saying that he just went along with the party stand. Don't they have minds of their own? [Don't they] know how to stand up for what is true [despite] the party? That is not good," Dakay said.

Confusion

Court of Appeals Justice Regalado Maambong, a member of the Constitutional Commission that framed the 1987 Charter, has also apologized for the unclear provision on whether the House and the Senate should vote jointly or separately in amending the Charter through a Con-ass.

"I have to tell you very frankly, perhaps we should [issue] an apology. We missed this one … we failed to amend … we did not pay attention to the provision [concerning a Con-ass]," he said in Cebuano over radio dyLA.

Maambong said it was the committee on the legislative department, then headed by now retired Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., that had formulated the unclear provision.

He said the mistake might have occurred because the provision was written with a unicameral form of government in mind.

Maambong recalled that the commission was then veering toward a unicameral system but that a presidential/bicameral form of government was eventually approved at the plenary.

The delegates subsequently forgot to redo the pertinent provision, he said.

Maambong said this mistake had resulted in an unending debate on the issue.

No way

Dakay wants other Cebuano congressmen to also apologize to their respective constituents and explain why they backed the Con-ass plan.

But the lawmakers in question, including Deputy Speaker Raul del Mar of Cebu's north district, refused to do so, saying they were maintaining their stand.

Supreme Court of the Philippines
Judicial and Bar Council
Manila

ANNOUNCEMENT

A. The Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) announces the opening of the positions of ASSOCIATE JUSTICE of the SUPREME COURT, vice Hon. Reynato S. Puno, who was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on 07 December 2006, and ASSOCIATE JUSTICE of the COURT OF APPEALS, vice Hon. Eliezer R. De los Santos whose permanent and total disability retirement was approved by the Supreme Court effective 31 December 2006.

Applications or recommendations for these positions must be submitted NOT LATER THAN 23 DECEMBER 2006 to the JBC Secretariat, 2nd Flr. Centennial Bldg., Supreme Court, Padre Faura St., Manila (Tel.No.552-9512; Fax No.552-9598; e-mail address jbc@supremecourt.gov.ph; jbc_supremecourt@yahoo.com.ph). Recommendations must bear the conformity of the recommendee.

B. The JBC is also accepting applications for judgeship positions in the following courts:

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ABRA
MTC Bucay
3rd MCTC Pilar-Villaviciosa San Isidro
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5th MCTC Sal-lapadan-Bucloc Daguioaman
6th MCTC La Paz-Langayan
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4th MCTC Narvacan-Nagbukel Santa
5th MCTC Sta. Maria-Burgos
6th MCTC Santiago-San Esteban
7th MCTC Banayoyo-Lidlidda San Emilio
8th MCTC Galimuyod-Salcedo
10th MCTC Cervantes-Quirino
11th MCTC Sta. Cruz-Sta. Lucia
13th MCTC Alilem-Sugpon

ILOCOS NORTE
MCTC Br.2, Pasuquin

MT. PROVINCE
1st MCTC Barlig-Sadanga
4th MCTC Natonin-Paracelis

PANGASINAN
MTCC Br.3, Dagupan City
MTC Infanta
1st MCTC Burgos-Mabini-Dasol
10th MCTC Natividad-San Quintin

REGION II
BATANES
MTC Itbayat
MTC Sabtang
1st MCTC Basco-Mahatao
2nd MCTC Ivana-Uyugan

CAGAYAN
MTC Abulug
MTC Buguey
MTC Br.3, Lal-lo
MTC Rizal

ISABELA
4th MCTC Maconacon-Divilican
7th MCTC Palanan-Diapiqui
8th MCTC Angadanan-San Guillermo
12th MCTC Mallig-Quezon
14th Ramon-San Isidro
15th MCTC Jones-San Agustin

KALINGA
6th MCTC Kabugao-Conner Calanasan

NUEVA VIZCAYA
MTC Ambaguio
MTC Kasibu
MTC Kayapa

QUIRINO
MTC Diffun

REGION III
AURORA
MTC Dingalan
2nd MCTC Maria Aurora-Dipaculao
3rd MCTC Baler-San Luis
1st MCTC Casiguran-Dilasag Dinalongan

BATAAN
MTC Mariveles
4th MCTC Bagac-Morong

PAMPANGA
3rd MCTC Sto. Tomas-Minalin

NUEVA ECIJA
RTC Br.32, Guimba
MTC Carranglan
MTC Guimba
MTC Lupao
MTC Pantabangan
MTC Talavera
MTC Sto. Domingo
MTC Talugtog
3rd MCTC Laur-Gabaldon
4th MCTC Cabiao-San Isidro

TARLAC
1st MCTC Ignacia-Mayantoc San Clemente-San Jose

ZAMBALES
3rd MCTC Botolan-Cabangan

REGION IV
MARINDUQUE
MTC Mogpog
MTC Torrijos

MINDORO OCCIDENTAL
MTC San Jose
MTC Sta. Cruz
MTC Sablayan
1st MCTC Abra de Ilog-Paluan
2nd MCTC Lubang-Looc
3rd MCTC Magsaysay-Rizal Calintaan

PALAWAN
RTC Br 50, Puerto Princesa City
MTC Culion
5th MCTC Araceli-Dumaran
7th MCTC Quezon-Balabac Marcos
9th MCTC Brooke's Point Espanola

QUEZON
MTC Gen. Luna
MTC Guinayangan
MTC Mulanay
MTC Tagkawayan
MTC Unisan
5th MCTC Polillo-Panukulan
6th MCTC Burdeos-Jumalig Patnanungan
8th MCTC Alabat-Quezon Perez
9th MCTC San Narciso-Buenavista
10th MCTC San Francisco-San Andres

ROMBLON
2nd MCTC Corcuera-Concepcion Banton
3rd MCTC Looc-Alcantara-Sta. Fe San Jose

REGION IX
SULU
MTC Jolo
1st MCTC Indana-Parang-Maimbong-Arolas Tulawie (Talipao)
2nd MCTC Patikul-Panmao-Marungas Pangutaran-New Panamoc
3rd MCTC Luuk-Kalingalam-Caluang
4th MCTC Siasi-Tapul-Lugus-Padami Pata-Tongkil

TAWI-TAWI
1st MCTC Simunul-Balimbing-Panglima-Sugala
2nd MCTC Sitangkai-Sibutu
3rd MCTC Tandubas-South-Ubian Sapa-sapa
4th MCTC Mapun-Turtle Islands
5th MCTC Bongao-Languyan

ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE
MTC Sibuco
4th MCTC Siocon-Baliguian-Siraway
6th MCTC Labason-Gutalac

ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR
MTC Manicahan-Taluksangay
7th MCTC Dimataling-Tabina Pitogo
13th MCTC Kumalarang-Lake-Wood-Bayog

ZAMBOANGA SIBUGAY
3rd MCTC Kabasalan-Siay-Payao
4th MCTC Olutanga-Mabuhay Talusan
12th MCTC Malangas-Imelda Deplahan

REGION X
AGUSAN DEL NORTE
1st MCTC Magallanes-Las Nieves
3rd MCTC Jabonga-Kitcharo

AGUSAN DEL SUR
1st MCTC San Francisco-Bunawan Rosario
2nd MCTC Trento-Sta.Josefa-Veruela
3rd MCTC Loreto-La Paz
4th MCTC Esperanza-San Luis-Talacogon

BUKIDNON
RTC Br 9. Malaybalay
MTC San Fernando
6th MCTC Kibawe-Damulog-Kadingilan

MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL
2nd MCTC Sapang Dalaga-Concepcion

MISAMIS ORIENTAL
8th MCTC Initao-Libertad

SURIGAO DEL NORTE
MTC Mainit
4th MCTC Claver-Gigaquit
5th MCTC Tubod-Alegria
7th MCTC Loreto-Libjo-Tubajon
10th MCTC Del Carmen-San Isidro-Benito
11th MCTC Sta. Monica-Burgos

REGION XI
COMPOSTELA VALLEY
MTC Maragusan
1st MCTC Compostela-New Bataan

DAVAO ORIENTAL
MTC Baganga
1st MCTC Cateel-Boston
2nd MCTC Caraga-Manay Tarragona

SURIGAO DEL SUR
MTC Tandag
1st MCTC Cantilan-Carrascal
3rd MCTC Tago-San Miguel
5th MCTC Marihatag-San Agustin
7th MCTC Hinatuan-Tagbina

REGION XII
LANAO DEL NORTE
RTC Br.2, Iligan City
MTC Sultan Naga Dimaporo
8th MCTC Sapad-Nunungan

LANAO DEL SUR
MTC Calanogas
3rd MCTC Ganassi-Madamba-Pagayawan Pualas

MAGUINDANAO
RTC Br.15, Sarif Aguak
MTC Kabuntalan
MTC Shariff Aguak
MTC Sultan Kudarat
2nd MCTC Dinaig-Datu Piang-Talayan
3rd MCTC Ampatuan-Sultan sa Barongis
4th MCTC Pagalungan-Buluan Datu Paglas
5th MCTC Upi-South Upi
5th SCC Maganoy

NORTH COTABATO
3rd MCTC Kabacan-Carmen-Banisilan

SULTAN KUDARAT
MTC Palimbang
11th SCC Palimbang

C. The JBC also announces the opening of judgeship positions in courts which will be vacated in view of the retirement of the incumbent judges therein on the dates indicated below:

PLACE/STATION	DATE OF VACANCY
4th MCTC Moncada-San Manuel-Anao, Tarlac	4 January 2007
4th MCTC Motiong-Jiabong-San Jose, Samar	27 January 2007
RTC Br.24, Cabugao, Ilocos Sur	31 January 2007
RTC Br.266, Pasig City	1 February 2007
6th MTCC Passi City, Iloilo	1 March 2007
MTC Br.1, Sto. Tomas, Batangas	1 March 2007
RTC Br 23, Naga City, Camarines Sur	10 March 2007
RTC Br.276, Muntinlupa City	11 March 2007
MTC Maasim, Sarangani	29 March 2007
MCTC Katipunan, Zamboanga Del Norte	24 April 2007
RTC Br.33, Iloilo City	1 May 2007
RTC Br.31, Manila	9 May 2007
1st MCTC Quezon-Licab, Nueva Ecija	11 May 2007
RTC Br.52, Sorsogon City, Sorsogon	15 May 2007
RTC Br.12, Malolos, Bulacan	16 May 2007

Applications or recommendations for courts mentioned in B and C must be submitted NOT LATER THAN 12 JANUARY 2007 to the JBC Secretariat. Applicants must also submit 6 copies of each of the following:

Application or Recommendation Letter
Personal Data Sheet (JBC Form I down-loadable from the JBC Website http://jbc.supremecourt.gov.ph)
ID Picture (2x2)
Certificate of Good Standing or latest official receipt from the IBP National Treasurer
ITR for 2 preceding years
Clearances from NBI, Ombudsman, Office of the Bar Confidant and employer
Transcript of Records
Police Clearance from place of residence
Certificate of Admission to the Bar (with Bar Rating)
Sworn Medical Certificate issued within 2 months prior to the filing of the application

12 December 2006.

MA. LUISA D. VILLARAMA
Clerk of Court & Ex Officio Secretary

Correction

IN THE DEC. 12 ISSUE, a "Did You Know" box on Page A22 of the Metro section misstated that the Tala Leprosarium in Caloocan City was the first facility for leprosy patients in Asia. The Tala Leprosarium was founded at a much later date—in 1940—than the Culion Leper Colony in Palawan, which was established in 1904.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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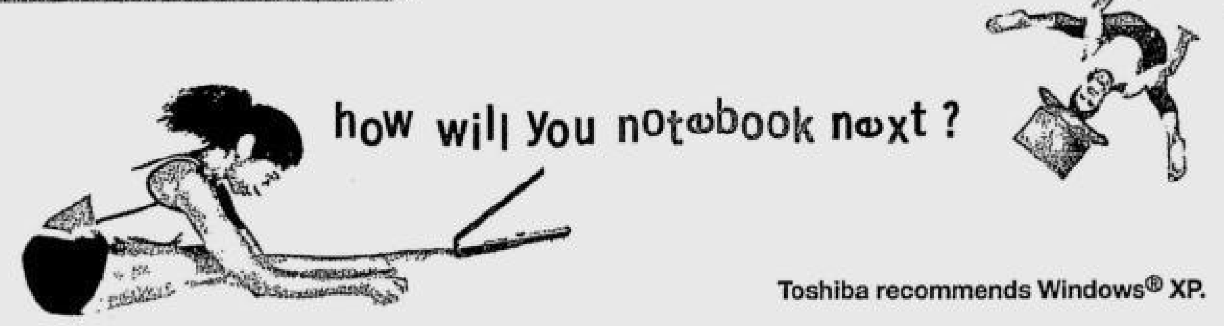
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Military raises red scare

By Dona Pazzibugan

THE MILITARY ONCE AGAIN RAISED THE communist scare as it placed its troops in Metro Manila on stand by for this Sunday's major Church-led rally in Manila against the government's Charter change campaign.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said there was the possibility that the communist New People's Army (NPA) would try to sabotage the rally and blame it on the government.

He also mentioned the radical Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM), a group of Islamic converts behind past bomb attacks, as another possible source of threat.

Esperon, however, acknowledged the military had not validated intelligence reports on plans to disrupt the scheduled prayer rally at the Luneta.

"We cannot quantify the seriousness of this but once a peaceful rally is provoked or agitated to become violent, it could be dangerous," he said after emerging from a two-hour command conference at the National Capital Region Command (NCRCom) headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo.

"It would also not be to our interest if (the rally is) sabotaged and the government itself is blamed for that," Esperon added.

He said the possible saboteurs could come from "terrorist armed groups who would want to supplant democracy with communism."

"Explosives could be one of the sabotage acts. I hope not, I hope not. But I must tell you that our interest is, if that is meant to be a peaceful rally then we really hope that it will remain peaceful," he said.

NCRCom chief Brig. Gen. Ben Dolorfino said his group has at least seven companies or about 600 troops on stand by in case the National Capital Region Police Office, which plans to deploy some 5,300 anti-riot police personnel to the rally, requests reinforcement.

As of yesterday the NCRCom has been placed on blue alert, although officials said this could go up to red alert during the weekend.

Airport to collect P200 for security

By Nikko Dizon

STARTING JANUARY next year, Ninoy Aquino International Airport authorities will be charging passengers a P200 security fee in addition to the P550 terminal fee already in place.

Only overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) are exempted from paying the new fee, which is expected to generate some P700 million annually.

Alfonso Cusi, general manager of the Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa), said that the security fee will definitely be implemented because of the need for additional security equipment at the airport terminals.

The security fee, recently approved by the Miaa Board, will be used for the "total upgrading" of security equipment at the Naia terminals, added Oscar Paras, Miaa senior assistant general manager, in an interview with INQUIRER. This would include the purchase of new surveillance cameras and state-of-the-art X-ray machines, among others.

The security fee for international flight passengers will be imposed for at least five years, Paras said.

"The money is earmarked exclusively for the security development program of the Miaa. Under the law, the Miaa can't spend a single centavo collected from the security fees for any other purpose outside the security program," Paras said.

The Miaa had earlier suggested incorporating the security fee in airline tickets but airlines have expressed their reservations.

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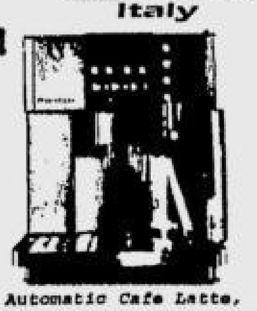

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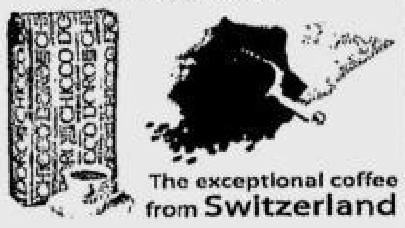

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DAHIL SMART TAYO

Mercy mission started with GMA vow to old lady

From page A1

Sur and P6 million from the House of Representatives.

Ms Arroyo visited Albay last week after the supertyphoon struck on Nov. 30, claiming hundreds of lives and damaging billions of pesos worth of property. Another typhoon, "Seniang," hit the Visayas a week later and sideswiped Bicol. *(See related story on Page A16.)*

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. said that when she arrived in Manila from Bicol, the President immediately called him up and ordered him to organize the mercy mission to respond immediately to the disaster.

Andaya said the old woman had embraced Ms Arroyo in Legazpi and told her "not to forget them." The incident might have left a lasting image in the President's mind which prompted her to launch the mercy mission, he said.

The caravan of trucks, loaded with assorted food and nonfood items worth P200 million, and earth-moving heavy equipment left Manila on Tuesday. According to local officials, Albay will receive 40 percent of the relief goods, followed by Camarines Sur, 30 percent; Catanduanes, 20 percent, and Sorsogon, 10 percent.

Bayani Fernando, chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and head of the mercy mission, said the local governments of [illegible] Manila pooled together most of the resources and assistance.

Among the items for immediate distribution to the typhoon victims are iron sheets for roofing, nails, plywood, lumber, clothes, foodstuffs and drinking water.

Fernando said the heavy equipment and trucks would be used to clear and clean the areas ravaged by the supertyphoon to prevent the spread of diseases and improve sanitation.

Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Raymund "LRay" Villafuerte said the provincial government was thankful that funds to rehabilitate and rebuild schools had been coming in.

Damaged schools

Although his province has suffered only a number of casualties, Villafuerte said damage to school facilities and other government infrastructure facilities could run to as much as P1 billion, including those previously damaged by Typhoon "Milenyo."

During a Cabinet meeting on Tuesday, Ms Arroyo ordered the transmission to Congress of a P10-billion additional budget request for the provinces ravaged by five strong typhoons that hit the country this year, Andaya said. The amount would be included in the 2007 national budget for the rehabilitation all over the country of areas damaged by typhoons in 2006.

At least three mayors from Metro Manila have joined the caravan to bring their contributions and to show their sympathy to victims of the calamity.

Metro mayors' aid

Mayor Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte of Quezon City announced that his government had allocated P10 million for the seven provinces severely damaged by Reming. Of the amount, P3 million would be given to Camarines Sur.

Mayor Pedro Cuerpo of Rodriguez, Rizal, said municipal employees had responded to the call for help of Bicolanos by foregoing their traditional Christmas party and giving instead P250,000 for the victims.

Pateros Mayor Rosendo Capco said that even though his town is the smallest among the Metro Manila local governments, he joined the mission as a gesture of sympathy and concern.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development would be the one to divide the truckloads of relief assistance among the six typhoon-hit provinces in Bicol, said Chief Supt. Victor Boco, chair of the Regional Disaster Coordinating Council.

The provincial disaster coordinating councils, headed by the governors, will divide the goods among the 31 affected municipalities, while the municipal disaster coordinating councils will divide it among the more than 2,364 affected villages.

Boco added that the P200 million spent for the relief goods was not part of the P1 billion that Malacañang ordered released through the National Disaster Coordinating Council for relief and rehabilitation efforts in areas affected by Typhoons "Paeng," "Queenie" and "Milenyo."

Gratitude

Goods intended for Camarines Sur were also brought to Albay yesterday, but bringing them back to the province would be a problem after the concrete Travesia Bridge in Guinobatan town collapsed yesterday from the weight of trucks and equipment.

Albay Gov. Fernando Gonzales, who has supervised the relief operations since "Reming" struck, thanked Ms Arroyo for the relief caravan, as well as the foreign governments, government and private agencies, nongovernment organizations and individuals who gave donations in cash and kind.

"Their help has certainly gone a long way to ease the sufferings of Albayanos," Gonzales said.

PNP chief to politicos, actors …

From page A1

We need every cop we can get."

The program of the rally will include a Mass and prayer rally.

He also reminded policemen of a Malacañang directive prohibiting government officials from joining antigovernment rallies.

Also yesterday, PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Samuel Pagdilao warned that police would "move in" if protesters this Sunday become unruly.

"If the situation requires and when a public assembly becomes violent, the police will have to move in," Pagdilao said.

He said the police would enforce existing laws governing public assemblies like Batas Pambansa 880 (The Public Assembly Act of 1985).

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) had earlier warned soldiers from joining this Sunday's rally.

Calderon also warned they would arrest anyone carrying firearms during the rally.

Yesterday, Calderon presided over a command conference at Camp Crame to map out security preparations for the rally. He said he alerted some 8,000 policemen all over Metro Manila for the rally.

"We emphasize that maximum tolerance will be enforced and the rights of demonstrators will be respected. There is no cause of alarm," Calderon assured.

Calderon also said there was a possibility that "provocateurs" would set up a confrontation with police. "We appeal to militant groups not make this gathering violent."

The other day, Varilla met with leaders of militant groups joining the rally and managed to wrangle from them an assurance that the gathering would be peaceful.

He told the militant leaders that on their way to Luneta, they would be allowed to unfurl their streamers and banners. But once they arrived at Luneta, these would have to be hidden, he said.

Varilla said the 4,300 cops that would be deployed to Luneta would be augmented by another 600 from police commands in Regions 3 and 4-A.

He also said they would post a "token force" of antiriot police to secure roads leading to the Malacañang Palace, which will be fortified by the Presidential Security Group (PSG).

Police say bomb may have burned Dodot's car

By Jocelyn R. Uy and Margaux C. Ortiz

A HOLE ON THE FLOOR OF THE front passenger seat was caused by a blast that tore through Pasig Rep. Robert "Dodot" Jaworksi's Toyota Innova and set it ablaze on Tuesday, a police official yesterday said.

Explosion

"There was explosion on that part. The right chassis was damaged. But whether it was caused by a bomb or an improvised explosive device, we have no conclusion yet," Pasig police chief Senior Supt. Francisco Uyami Jr. told the INQUIRER by phone.

Jaworski, his brother Ryan and bodyguard Romy Gamosa immediately scampered out of the vehicle upon hearing a "bang" and seeing smoke coming out of the van, which seconds later blew up.

The Pasig police have formed a task force that will investigate the car explosion that almost killed Jaworski. Conducting a parallel investigation is the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

Jaworski, who is running against Pasig Mayor Vicente Eusebio's son Bobby in next year's elections, suspected that the explosion on the northbound lane of C-5 Highway in Barrio Ugong in Pasig was related to politics or drugs.

Director Reynaldo Varilla, Metro Manila police chief, said it seemed that faulty wiring was not the cause of the blast. But he would not confirm anything until he received the official report from investigators.

The only thing that Task Force Innova—named after Jaworksi's 6-month-old silver Toyota Innova—confirmed yesterday was that "there was an explosion." But what caused it, they have yet to find out.

"We are not ruling out anything yet because the post-blast investigation and the forensic tests have not yet finished. We are certain that there was an explosion and we are still determining its origin," Chief Supt. Luizo Ticman, Eastern Police District Director, told the INQUIRER.

Personnel from the Bomb Data Center in Camp Crame were already conducting tests on debris gathered from the site of Tuesday's blast.

11 sacks of evidence

Uyami said the bomb experts had filled up at least 11 sacks of evidence, including dust and scraps in the area.

"They will be studying those pieces of evidence bit by bit," he said.

Varilla said investigators were closely coordinating with the Jaworski family to account for the events that took place before the reported explosion happened to get leads.

In Manila, NBI Director Nestor Mantaring said he assigned the case to Ruel Lasala, chief of the bureau's National Capital Region Office.

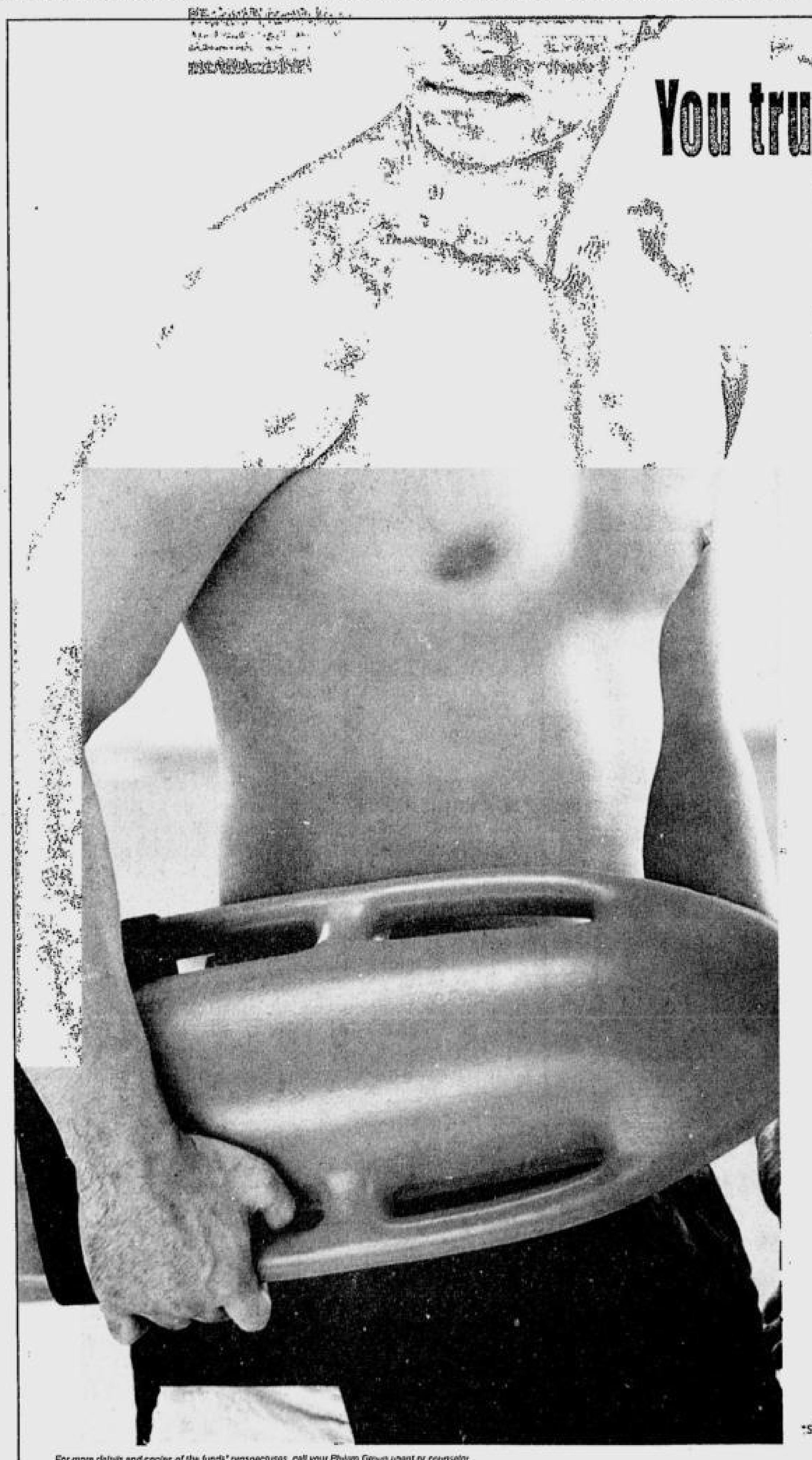
"I saw House Speaker Jose de Venecia on television on Tuesday night, asking the NBI to step into the investigation," Mantaring told reporters.

Probe team

He said the investigating team would look into all angles of the explosion, including politics and drugs, which Jaworski referred to as his only enemies.

Lasala said two other NBI units—the Reaction, Arrest and Interdiction Division (RAID) and the Anti-Terrorism Division (ATD)—would assist the NCR Office in the probe.

RAID chief Roel Bolivar said his office would conduct intelligence buildup while operatives of the Explosives and Ordnance Division of the Philippine National Police were analyzing debris.



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Peso hits 4-month high: 49.425 to $1

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY SURGED to 49.425 against the US dollar, its strongest finish in four-and-a-half years, on strong inflows from foreign investments and heavy remittances from overseas Filipino workers ahead of the holiday season.

The peso was further boosted by the decision of the US Federal Reserve Board to keep key US interest rates unchanged, which in turn spelled bearish prospects for the US dollar and dollar-denominated assets.

It was the local currency's highest finish since ending at 49.35 on May 20, 2002. The peso, which ended 2005 at 53.09, has thus appreciated by about 7 percent since the start of the year.

"If you look at the BOP (balance of payments), it continues to be in surplus and one of the reason is the increase in OFW remittances, but there are other sources of inflows also like exports … and at the same time you see continued increase in inflows of portfolio and foreign direct investments," BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

"All of these inflows are supporting the value of the peso," he explained.

The BSP has ruled out intervening to temper the peso's appreciation if only to appease sectors adversely affected by the local currency's continued uptrend, such as exporters and the families of OFWs who are now getting less pesos for their dollars.

"Our exchange rate policy is to let the exchange rate be determined by market forces, with scope for BSP from time to time only to smoothen excess volatility and we stick to that," Tetangco said.

Increased investor optimism as a result of improved fiscal and political setting in the Philippines has also spurred the buying of peso-denominated assets like Treasury bills and bonds as well as equities listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange in recent months.

But London-based Fitch Ratings, one of the world's three most influential debt watchdogs, yesterday said in its special report "Asia Sovereign Outlook for 2007" that political developments in the country next year could influence its assessment on sovereign creditworthiness.

The Philippines is set to hold mid-term congressional elections next year.

At its current composition, President Macapagal-Arroyo is supported by a ruling coalition in the House of Representatives but is opposed in the Senate.

DOMINGO

Andrea Domingo back in harness

FORMER IMMIGRATION CHIEF ANDREA Domingo is back in government, taking the post of acting general manager and chief executive officer of the Philippine Reclamation Authority, which is under the Department of Finance.

Domingo's appointment as well as those of eight other officials were announced yesterday by Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

He said President Macapagal-Arroyo had appointed lawyer Ricardo Blancaflor as undersecretary in the Department of National Defense; and lawyers Katrina Alday, Richard Amurao and Minerva Tans as assistant secretaries in the Office of the President.

The President also appointed Romeo Junia as director with the rank of assistant secretary at the Presidential Management Staff; and Paulino Cases Jr. and Benedicto Ternate Sr., as acting members of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board. *Christine O. Avendaño*

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, December 14, 2006
2nd Week of Advent
John of the Cross

1st Reading: Is 41:13-20
Gospel: Matthew 11:11-15

Jesus said to the crowds, "No one greater than John the Baptist has come forward among the sons of women, and yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven is something to be conquered and the unyielding seize it.

Up to the time of John, there was only prophesy: all the prophets and the Law; and if you believe me, John is this Elijah, whose coming was predicted. Let anyone with ears listen!"

Commentary

Isaiah's description of God: Grasping us by the hand, telling us not to fear and once again telling us that our redeemer is coming. We are given a vision of what we are to be—like John the Baptist, calling for judgment and what we are to be doing as the least in the kingdom of God—making sure the poor are heard, that there is water for all, that the earth and its people blossom and thrive so that everyone knows that the hand of the Lord does this and that God is recreating us in the person/the body of Jesus.

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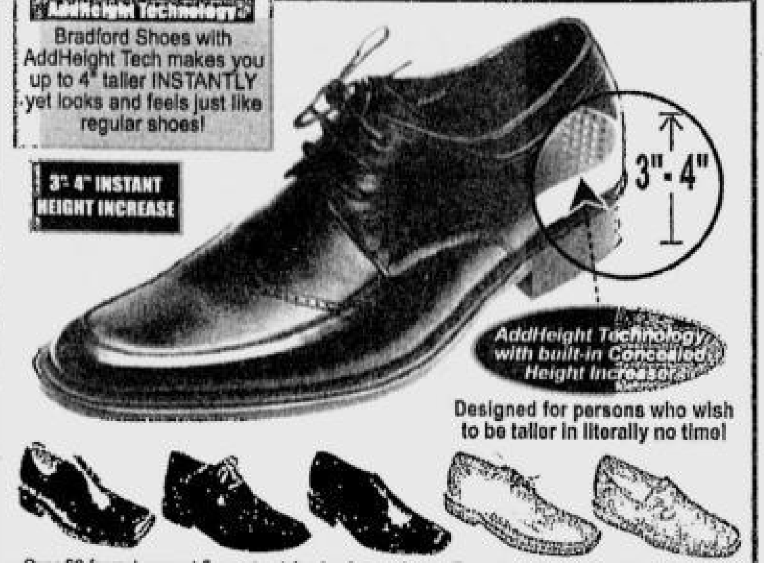
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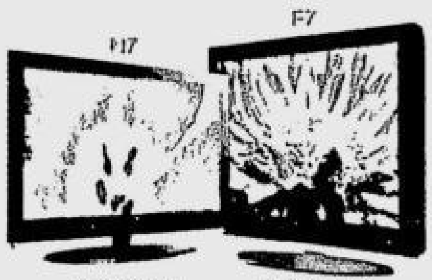

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Judge junks US demand

From page A1

custody of accused Smith by the US military authorities was terminated after the completion of the trial and rendition of judgment of conviction."

While Pozon agreed with the defense's contention that "judicial proceedings as a whole included appeal," he ruled that there was "no more need for continued custody of accused Smith by the US military authorities" as his appearance in court was no longer required during the appeals process.

The ruling favored opposition from the private lawyer of the complainant "Nicole," and snubbed the concurrence of the US Embassy, the Department of Justice and the Department of Foreign Affairs on the stand that Smith should remain in US custody until the end of the appeals process.

Smith's lead lawyer, Jose Justiniano, said he would "go up to the Court of Appeals to question the legality" of Pozon's decision.

"We are disappointed with the order," Justiniano said. "We believe it has no legal and factual basis, and his (Pozon's) interpretation of VFA provisions is wrong."

'Misunderstanding' of VFA

In a statement released some seven hours after Pozon ruled on the case, the US Embassy insisted on its interpretation of the VFA as applied to Smith, lauded the DFA and the DOJ for "clarifying" its position in court, and issued what may be read as a warning regarding RP-US relations.

"Continued US-Philippines military cooperation relies upon adherence to the VFA, which provides a clear framework for the legal status of visiting US service members," it said.

The embassy said an appeal was "being filed in the appropriate court" to reacquire custody of Smith, who yesterday spent his 10th day in a separate cell at the crowded MCJ.

It said Pozon's ruling "reflect[ed] a misunderstanding of the nature of Philippine obligations under the terms of the VFA during judicial proceedings."

It added: "The VFA is an international bilateral agreement that is binding on both the US and the Republic of the Philippines.

"Art. V, Par. 6 of this agreement specifies that 'The custody of any US personnel over whom the Philippines is to exercise jurisdiction shall immediately reside with United States military authorities, if they so request, from the commission of the offense until completion of all judicial proceedings.'"

(An earlier statement issued by the embassy shortly after Smith's conviction said the US government would abide by the VFA "through the completion of judicial proceedings, including any appeals."

(It said Smith was "a member of the US military who was on a military mission in the Philippines" and was "not a private citizen."

("Therefore, the handling of his case is subject to the terms of the VFA," it said.)

Inappropriate authority

Smith's legal team filed on Dec. 8 an agreement signed by US Ambassador Kristie Kenney and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and expressing the two countries' concurrence that the soldier should remain under US custody at the US Embassy pending his appeal.

It was an amendment of an agreement signed by Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño as the Philippine representative filed earlier that day.

But Pozon said neither Gonzalez nor Zuño was "the appropriate Philippine authority who can legally enter into such agreement." Citing the 1987 Administrative Code, Pozon said only the President or the foreign secretary could do so.

(The DOJ had reasoned that Gonzalez and Zuño signed the agreement in the DOJ's capacity as legal adviser of the DFA.)

Yesterday, the DFA through its spokesperson Ed Malaya said it was "respectful" of Pozon's ruling.

"The DFA will continue to explore remedies available in order for the Philippines to be in compliance with its treaty obligations," Malaya told reporters without elaborating.

He maintained that the RP-US relationship was "strong, resilient and multifaceted."

"We work with them on a number of issues. We cooperate with them in a huge number of projects and programs. We hope and trust this relation will remain close and mutually beneficial," he said.

Officials of the DOJ, DFA and US Embassy met for a discussion shortly after Pozon issued his ruling.

Zuño, who attended the meeting, said their "more likely options" included appealing the ruling or taking the case to the Supreme Court.

'Pleasing the Left'

Speaking with reporters after attending the weekly briefing of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Gonzalez accused Pozon of wrongly interpreting the provisions of the VFA in order to "suit his agenda."

He said the judge was "sympathetic to Nicole and leftist groups."

"I think his agenda is to please the Left," Gonzalez said, adding:

"Maybe he thinks that by doing so, he would be praised and would get the kudos and hosannas of certain sectors.

"He's sympathetic to the victim. He's sympathetic to those who support the victim, and who are those supporting the victim?"

In an interview with the INQUIRER, Gonzalez said the DOJ would not budge from its position that Smith should remain in US custody until the final resolution of his case.

"Our position is that the judge is wrong. Custody should remain with the Americans. But we will support the American position. That is our commitment. That is our treaty obligation and we have to comply with a treaty obligation," he said.

Gonzalez assailed Pozon for not honoring the VFA, which governs the conduct of visiting US troops in joint military exercises in the Philippines.

"We respect the judge's decision, but there is a VFA," Gonzalez said.

"Do we have to bring this to the Supreme Court [for resolution] when this treaty was ratified in the Senate?" he said, adding that Pozon's ruling had already "ruffled" RP-US relations.

Gonzalez also said the DOJ was taking this position "not because we love the Americans [but] because we're bound by our treaty."

No longer applicable

"That must be clear to everybody. Our hands are tied here. There is a treaty, and it's part of the law of the land. It's just like Congress passing a law and the judge saying, 'No, I don't want to follow that.'"

Pozon's six-page order upheld his decision on Dec. 4, which invoked Paragraph 10 of the same VFA article in ordering Smith's "temporary" detention at the MCJ pending an agreement between the Philippines and the United States on where he should serve his sentence of up to 40 years, as the provision stipulated.

"...[T]his court maintains that Article 5, Paragraph 10 of the [VFA] applies in this case considering that a judgment finding [Smith] guilty had already been rendered and promulgated on Dec. 4," Pozon said.

"Contrary to the claims of accused Smith, the [DOJ and the DFA], Article 5, Paragraph 6 of the [VFA] no longer applies after the rendition of judgment in this case. The said provision applies only during the judicial proceedings in the trial court," he said.

Article 5, Paragraph 6 of the VFA gives the US government custody of American troops charged before a Philippine court within the duration of judicial proceedings upon its request. The provision states that judicial proceedings, except the time for appeal, shall be completed within a year, or the US government "shall be relieved of any obligation" to produce the accused soldier in court.

Paragraph 10 stipulates that "the confinement or detention by Philippine authorities of US personnel" shall be in a facility agreed on by the Philippines and the US. It also provides for the accordance of the "right to visits and material assistance" to a convicted US soldier serving his sentence. *With reports from Volt Contreras, Christine O. Avendaño, Armand N. Nocum, TJ Burgonio and Philip C. Tubeza*

Pro-Smith group surfaces

By Tarra V. Quismundo

AS RAPE CONVICT LANCE Cpl. Daniel Smith cools his heels at the Makati City Jail (MCJ), a group is quietly praying that he will soon prove his innocence.

Led by a Filipino woman married to a US Navy man, the group simply called "Supporters of Daniel Smith" is preparing to hold a vigil for the jailed Marine.

"It's a group of military wives, expats (expatriates) and other Filipinos—bank employees, lawyers, men, women, daughters, grandmothers—who support Smith. This is the voice of Filipino women, not of that rape victim and her supporters," said Grace Santos, 34.

She said she formed the group after Smith was convicted on Dec. 4.

Santos said the group of around 30 members would be holding candle-light activities in front of the MCJ to inspire hope in the 21-year-old Smith, who has been sentenced to up to 40 years in prison for raping a Filipino woman inside a moving van on Nov. 1, 2005.

"I am doing this not because I am married to a US serviceman. I am doing this because I am a Filipina and I know what justice is," said Santos, a native of Bulacan.

Santos has visited Smith four times since he was taken to the MCJ, and brought him food and books.

Senators to attend Sunday prayer rally

From page A1

joining the rally in Rizal Park.

Senate President Manuel Villar Jr. told reporters that "we were invited [to the rally in Rizal Park] and I don't see anything wrong about it."

He said the rally would be a peaceful gathering of like-minded citizens opposed to Charter change (Cha-cha) at this time. "It's just an expression of our people's sentiments. Even though Cha-cha has been shelved, we should not ignore our people's right to express themselves," he said.

Vice President Noli de Castro said the rally on Sunday was a legitimate exercise of the people's democratic rights.

"It is better to express the people's views and sentiments with sobriety through prayer rallies and not through violent, illegal or extra-constitutional means," De Castro said.

Sen. Joker Arroyo said that if at all, the gathering should be turned instead into a "thanksgiving rally" following the defeat of the administration's dual-track move to tinker with the 1987 Charter either through a constituent assembly (Con-ass) and constitutional convention (Con-con).

"I don't see the need for it; we're talking about a dead issue. It's just a waste of time," Arroyo told reporters, referring to the rally. "If they're there to celebrate, fine, but not to crow about it."

Purification

Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, CBCP president, said the activities were a "call for the purification of reason, for the reawakening of the moral forces, for the just ordering of society."

"These gatherings will be one great occasion for the lay faithful in the dioceses to express their love and concern for the good of our country," Lagdameo said in a statement.

Lagdameo is set to lead a prayer rally at the grounds of the Jaro Cathedral in Iloilo City from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. tomorrow. He will then celebrate the first "Simbang Gabi" (dawn Mass) together with other priests of the diocese.

"Our answer to the crisis of leadership in our land is prayer: That our leaders may be enlightened and may have moral force also to lead the country toward truth, justice, peace and love," he said in the statement.

Speaker Jose de Venecia, one of the prime movers of the bid to revise the Charter, earlier said that the House of Representatives would take its "sweet time" in calling for a Con-con.

Its initial plan was to convene the administration-dominated House into a Con-ass without the Senate's participation, sparking protests.

With senators not buying the tack, De Venecia and company later went for Con-con, which, Villar said would have to wait until after the May 2007 elections.

People's will prevails

The senators, who had fiercely resisted the House move to amend the Charter through Con-ass and later Con-con, greeted with relief De Venecia's apparent concession of defeat of the administration's Charter change express.

"We feel good about it. We 're pleased that somehow the will of the people prevailed," Villar said.

Senate Pro Tempore Juan Flavier, a staunch proponent of Con-con, said: "There has been no time from the beginning. I don't know why they pushed it. At least they came to their senses. And that's good for the country."

Work of statesmen

Lagdameo urged senators to put the Con-con on hold until it was "purified from the negative impact" that apparently accompanied the Con-ass and the people's initiative, the other means put forward to change the Charter.

"May the work of the Con-con, if and when it is opportunely convoked, be the work of statesmen whose concern will not be to fit it to a pre-determined framework, but who will discern, discuss, debate on what will be the best for our country," he added.

United Opposition

Members of the United Opposition (UNO) will also join the rally in Rizal Park. "We in the political opposition will respect the Sunday event as purely a prayer rally," UNO spokesperson Ernesto Maceda said. "UNO members will be there but only as spectators."

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, president of UNO, said that what transpired at the House was an aborted constitutional coup d'etat. He was referring to the junked move to convene Congress into a constituent assembly.

"For this reason, we in UNO are supporting the call of President Cory Aquino for everyone to go to Luneta (Rizal Park) on Sunday," Binay told reporters.

No politicians on stage

Rallies will also be staged tomorrow in Makati, the country's financial district. Employees in Makati will add their voices to protests against moves to amend the Constitution.

"It's the first of its kind. There will be no political personalities on the stage," said the mayor who led massive protests in Makati's business district last year to call for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

A top official of the Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines said its members were also set to join the rally in Rizal Park.

"The Constitution is so sacred that it cannot be left to politicians alone," Bro. Manuel de Leon, a vice chair of the AMRSP, told the INQUIRER.

The AMRSP is an organization of around 360 congregations like the Franciscans, Dominicans, Benedictines, Jesuits, Augustinians, and the La Sallian and Marist Brothers.

Iloilo, Negros Occidental

In Iloilo, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Protestant Churches and militant and opposition groups are taking part in the prayer rally at the Jaro Cathedral.

Church leaders of various religious groups in Negros Occidental called on local officials to join the people in a prayer rally at the Bacolod public plaza also set on Friday.

"We need to send a strong message to the powers that be—both the majority bloc in the House of Representatives and Malacañang, that the people have had enough of these brazen machinations," Bacolod Bishop Vicente Navarra said in a statement issued at a press conference yesterday.

Navarra said the statement, issued by various groups, called the gathering tomorrow as the start of their protest. The statement was jointly issued by the Diocese of Bacolod, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, the Negros Ecumenical Council, the Negrenses United Against ConAss, members of the academe, people's organizations and cause-oriented groups.

Everyone who loves his country and cares for decency and morality in government should stand up and be counted, Navarra said.

The Promotion of Church People's Response in Negros Occidental is also joining the prayer rally tomorrow.

"(President Macapagal-Arroyo) and her allies in Congress cannot fool the people," PCPR Negros secretary general Fr. Romeo Tagud said at a press conference on Tuesday. The PCPR is an organization of clergy and lay people involved in the promotion of justice and human rights.

Fathers Benjamin Duran, Noli Gumayan and Fernando Flores of IFI, also announced at the press conference that IFI, which has about 250,000 members in Negros Occidental, is joining the prayer rally.

It said the country's problems resulted from the irresponsible governance by leaders "whom the people perceive to be with questionable authority, credibility and integrity." *With reports from Cynthia D. Balana in Manila; Nestor P. Burgos Jr. and Carla P. Gomez Inquirer Visayas*

Al-Qaida plot to disrupt Asean summit in Cebu bared

From page A1

said a possible attack also played a role, while the Japanese economic minister said the Philippines' handling of the situation had undermined its credibility.

'Extremely puzzling'

"Considering the size of the typhoon and the fact that it would have passed by Sunday morning, the reason for the postponement is extremely puzzling," Amari wrote, mentioning news reports that the move was triggered by terrorism concerns.

Amari added that the postponement "ruined the credibility of the Philippine government," saying the whole idea of hosting the meetings at a resort island was ill-conceived.

"Just the idea of gathering the leaders of 16 countries on tourist-infested Cebu island poses an extreme security risk," Amari wrote.

"We respect the views of other officials in the region, but the Philippines did the right thing in taking no chances with the safety of the leaders," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

"We all know the fickle nature of typhoons and there was no sense at all to act in a reckless and wanton manner," Bunye said in a statement.

'Just the weather'

Ambassador Vic Lecaros, a spokesperson for the summits' organizing committee, denied that terrorism threats played a role in the decision.

"I was in the room when that decision was taken," Lecaros said. "People were agonizing over weather reports, not security reports .... There was no terror, whatever, it was just the weather report.

"Terrorists are threatening everywhere. Those are acts of people that can be countered by security people. What you cannot counter is an act of nature."

Typhoon "Seniang" swept across the Visayas over the weekend, leaving at least 17 dead and another 17 missing. But Cebu, which forecasters said was unlikely to take a direct hit, only got rain and some gusty winds. A week earlier, Supertyphoon "Reming" killed more than 1,000 people.

Japanese Trade Minister Akira Amari said on his blog on Tuesday that Manila's explanation wasn't convincing enough.

In separate advisories on Thursday last week, the United States, Britain and Australia warned terrorists might be in the final stages of plotting attacks. Japan also issued a travel warning.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said on Tuesday that "a typhoon on one hand and the threat of attack on the other" prompted the postponement.

"The terrorists threatened to launch an attack" in the Philippines, he said.

Abu Sayyaf bandits

Some Abu Sayyaf bandits, along with Indonesian members of the Jemaah Islamiyah group, were believed to have traveled from their strongholds in Jolo and Basilan to carry out the attacks, going through Zamboanga City, said three security officials, who had knowledge of the operations and spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media.

Philippine intelligence agents carried out about 10 covert operations, including raids on suspected safe houses, in Zamboanga last month but failed to find the militants, the officials said.

The attacks allegedly were ordered by Abu Sayyaf chieftain Khadaffy Janjalani and top Indonesian terror suspect Dulmatin, targets of a monthslong US-backed offensive on Jolo, they said.

4 CDs seized

The plots were partly gleaned from intercepted rebel communications and four CDs seized from a captured Abu Sayyaf encampment on Jolo in August.

When experts decoded the CDs' contents, which contained Arabic passages, security officials concluded the militants might be planning a major attack in an unspecified city, possibly Cebu, in December, one official said.

Gonzales: Security not a factor

In the absence of concrete evidence, officials have given conflicting assessments of the threats.

The three security officials separately said the terror threats were a factor in the government's decision to postpone the high-profile meetings.

But National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales said he was not consulted by President Macapagal-Arroyo regarding the postponement, indicating security was not a factor in her decision.

Gonzales acknowledged there was "raw information" about plots by al-Qaida-linked militants against the meetings but said they were not substantiated and security officials doubted the militants' capability to stage a major attack.

"Everything considered, I still give credence to the weather as the cause of the postponement," Gonzales told the AP.

The postponement also came amid fresh rumors of another coup plot against Ms Arroyo that might have been linked with planned antigovernment protests in Manila at about the same time as the summits.

Power users to pay for typhoon damage

ELECTRICITY CONSUMERS IN the Philippines are set to be hit in the wallet as the state passes on the cost of repairing power lines following four deadly typhoons, officials said yesterday.

National Transmission Corp. (Transco) president Arthur Aguilar said it would lodge within the week a notice to regulators to allow it to collect from end-users the losses incurred from restoring the typhoon-damaged system.

He said 42 steel towers were destroyed when Typhoon "Paeng" hit the country in October.

Last week Typhoon "Seniang" destroyed another 116 steel towers and 887 wooden poles that link the country's transmission lines.

On Nov. 28 Typhoon "Reming" hit the Philippines while "Milenyo," slammed into northern Luzon and Manila in September leaving much of the capital without electricity for a week. *AFP*

Generics firm offers cheaper medicines

By Christian V. Esguerra

A LEADING INTERnational pharmaceutical company has offered a cheap alternative to high-priced medicines in the Philippines.

Sandoz, a member of the German-based pharmaceutical giant Novartis, yesterday presented a line of generic medicines costing about "40 to 60 percent" less than their branded counterparts.

The products include antibiotics, anti-hypertensives, drugs for diabetes and tuberculosis, and cholesterol-lowering medicines.

"What Sandoz offers to Filipinos are not just globally accepted medicines at much lower prices, but medicines that have been tested and passed the standards of international regulatory agencies," said company coordinator Avinash Potnis in a statement that was distributed at a press conference yesterday.

Potnis noted that the generic drugs being offered by Sandoz have all passed the standards set by the United States Food and Drug Administration, the European Medicines Agency, and the local Bureau of Food and Drugs.

"What we are bringing here are the same medicines available to patients in Europe and the US," he said.

The Sandoz offer came amid an aggressive government campaign to bring down the prices of medicines in the Philippines.

The state-run Philippine International Trading Corp. (PITC) earlier announced it would be importing some P700 million worth of low-cost medicines.

According to PITC head Roberto Pagdanganan, the company imported P400 million worth of medicines in 2005.

PTIC drug imports are sold in Botika ng Bayan outlets around the country, currently numbering 1,211. There are also 7,100 Botika ng Barangay branches that carry low-priced medicines.

Despite a lawsuit from pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, the government, through the PITC, is apparently moving with the program for cheaper medicines despite a lawsuit from pharmaceutical giant Pfizer.

The US-based Pfizer sued the PITC over the latter's attempts to come up with a cheaper version of Pfizer's patented, anti-hypertensive drug Norvasc.

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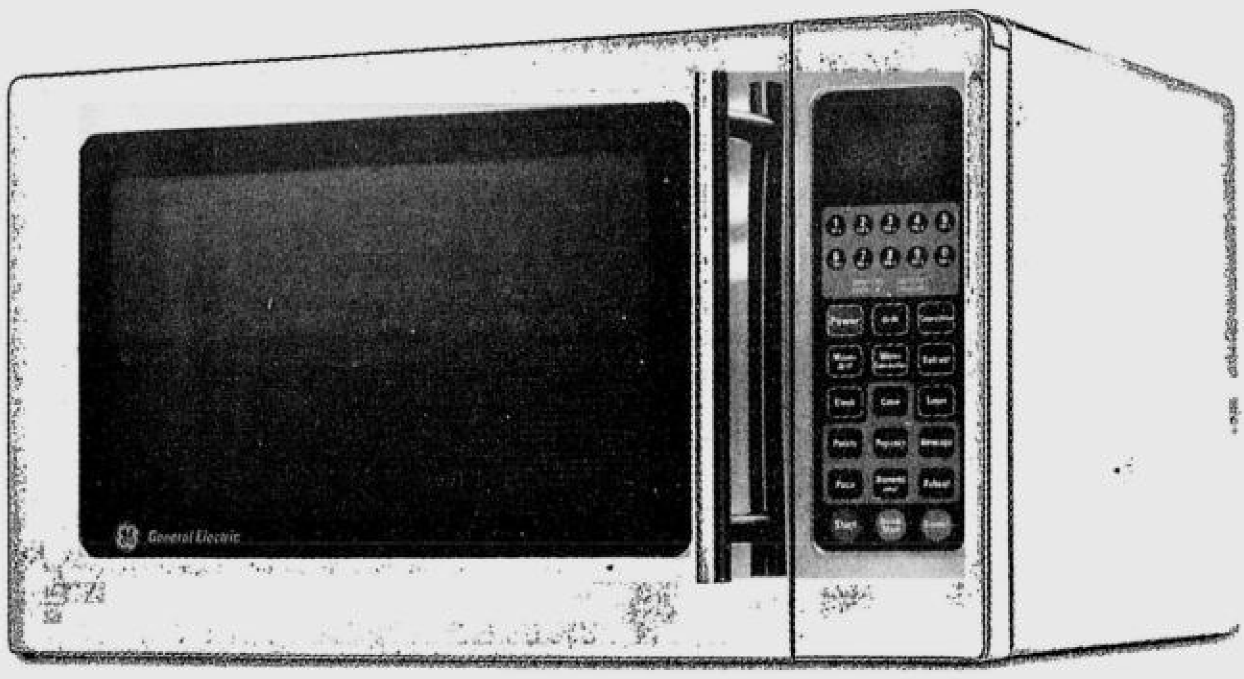

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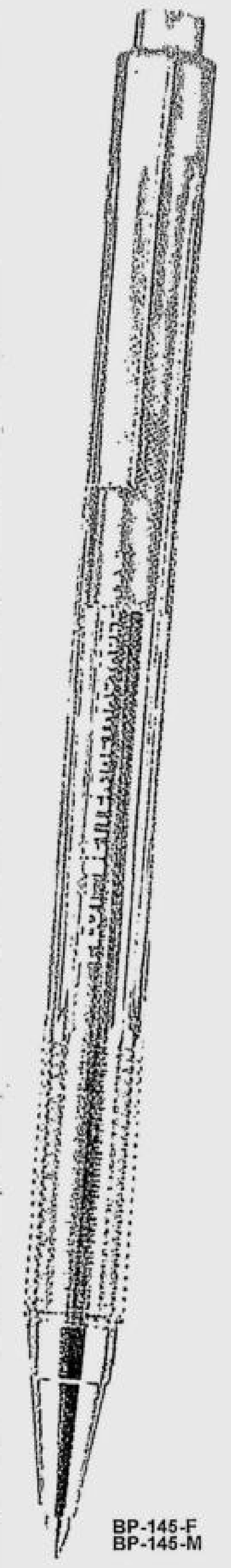

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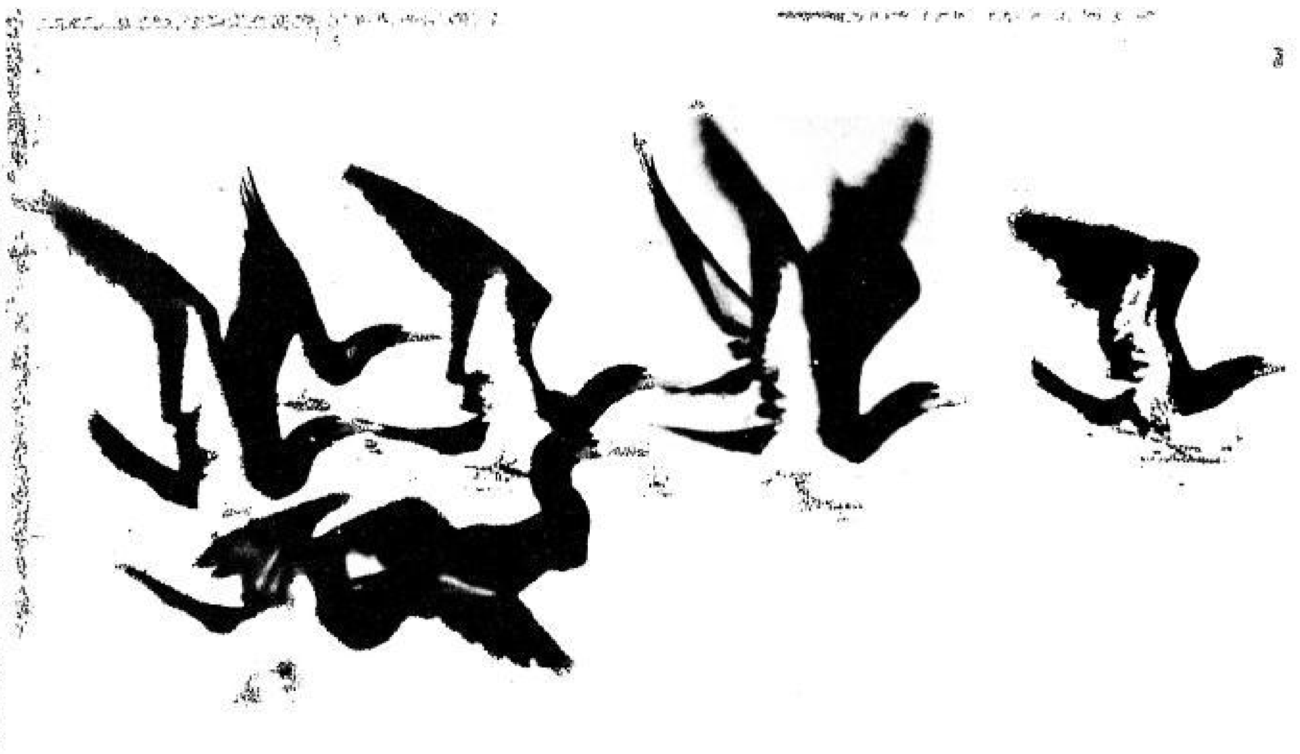
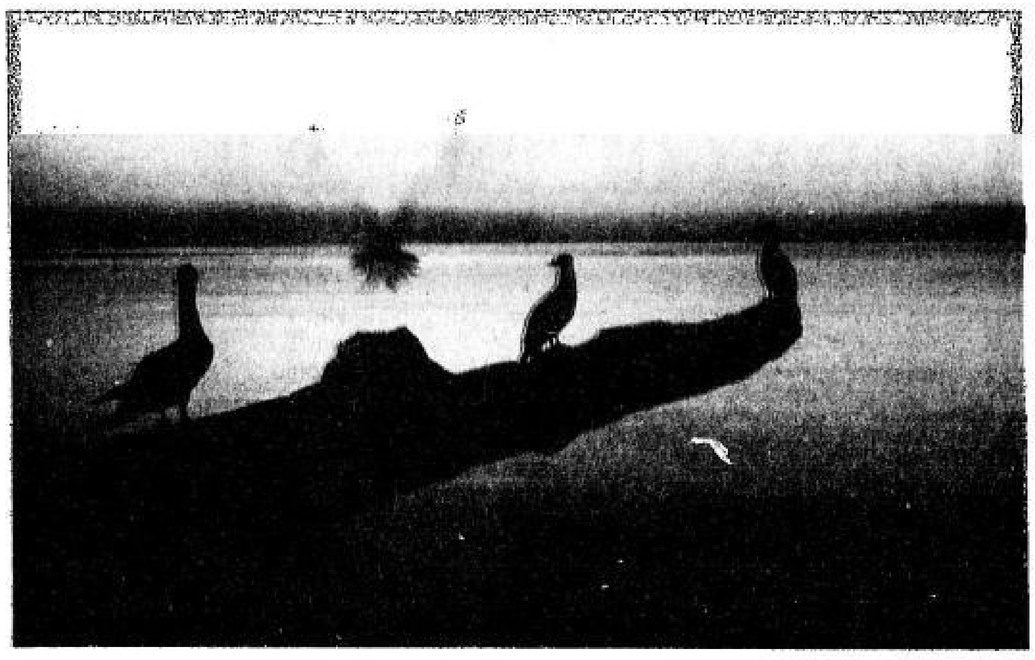


TWISTING IN THE WIND, flirting with the sand, or simply doing what they do best, the birds of Tubbataha are a sight to behold.

PHOTOS BY MELVYN CALDERON



AT THE END OF THE DAY, four Brown Booby seabirds, one of only eight, non-migrant species that regularly breed on the islet, return to roost from their winged journeying.

Tubbataha: Avian Eden

By Angelique Songco

THEY'RE A SIGHT TO BEHOLD. THEY TWIST in the wind, flirt with the sand, and conquer the whole island like it belonged to them. Which is true, in many ways.

The Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park and World Heritage Site, which lies in the central Sulu Sea 150 kilometers southeast of Puerto Princesa City, is one of the six known remaining breeding sites of seabirds in the Philippines. Thus, it has gained international acclaim as an important bird area. The Bird Islet is off-limits to outsiders except those conducting bird studies.

In the last two decades, however, the avian population in the area has declined by 55 percent, an alarming rate. In 1992, the last pair of masked boobies (*Sula dactylara*) was seen on the Bird Islet of Tubbataha; this specie has not been sighted elsewhere in the Philippines since.

The importance of preserving seabirds—which spend a substantial part of their lives foraging in open ocean and breeding in isolated islands and islets—can never be underestimated.

They are biological indicators of the health of our oceans and help maintain balance in the environment. They have the right to exist.

Population decline

But because of human invasion of their preferred territories, the seabird population has declined dramatically. Many species have disappeared from their known breeding ranges and nearly all species in Southeast Asia are now threatened.

Of the 100 species of birds recorded in Tubbataha, most are migrant species and only eight are known to be regularly breeding in its islets. These are the brown booby, red-footed booby, black noddy, brown noddy, great frigate bird, great crested tern and sooty tern.

Within Southeast Asia, Tubbataha represents the only known breeding area of the Philippine endemic subspecies of black noddy (*Anous minutus worcestri*) and one out of about four major breeding areas of sooty tern (*Sterna fuscata*).

Still, we know so little of them.

The lack of full information about these birds makes it difficult for us to map conservation strategies. It is best if we get to know more about their eating habits; their breeding success and survival or mortality rates; their dispersal patterns outside of the breeding season; and to what extent human activity has affected their growth.

Information gaps

To bridge these information gaps, Conservation International-Philippines provided the Tubbataha Management Office with funds to conduct seabird banding at Bird Islet from Oct. 20 to 25.

In this activity, we put a band on a bird's leg to identify it for observations about its behavior. It was the first time that bird banding was conducted in the Tubbataha Reefs and the first time that bands with a Philippine address were used.

The brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*), the sooty terns (*Sterna fuscata*), and the black noddy (*Anous minutus worcestri*) were identified for banding because the first two species have shown a major population decline while the black noddy specie in Tubbataha is no longer found elsewhere.

Park staff and volunteers from the Western Philippines University have been trained by protected area management specialist Arne Jensen in the proper banding. They worked under the consultant's strict supervision at all times.

Grueling task

It was grueling, made more so by the careful handling of the birds under the sun and on hot sand. We made sure that we caused the least possible disturbance. And when it appeared that the birds were stressed by our presence, we had to take a break as well.

We managed to band at least 450 birds during those days. And we returned home with the hope that as we get to know more about them, we will be able to craft better strategies to keep them and nurture them where they belong.

(The author is the park manager of the Tubbataha Reef Natural Park for four years now. A Palaweña and a mother of two, she teaches scuba diving. For inquiries about the banded birds, you may visit the Tubbataha Management Office, 2nd Floor, Basaya Building, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, or call at Tel. No. (48)434-5759. Conservation through Collaboration, a national conference on the management of the Tubbataha Reefs and the Greater Sulu Sea, will be held from Dec. 12 to 14 at the Asturias Hotel in Puerto Princesa City.)

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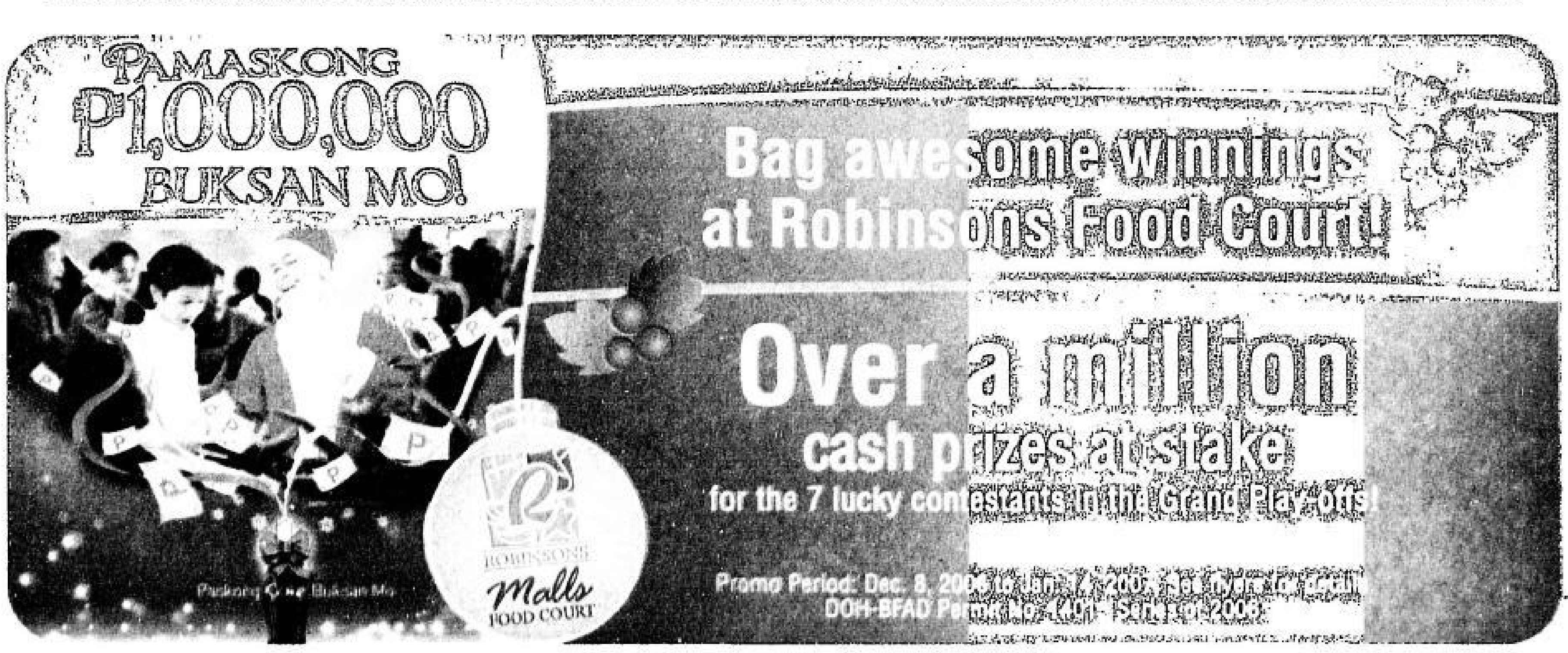

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Reyes takes full control of mining

ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY Angelo T. Reyes yesterday took active control of mining and environmental management, taking over direct control of crucial line agencies in his department that used to be handled by career officials.

Citing the need for "effective management," Reyes ordered a reshuffle of top officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which has around 22,000 employees in 16 regions.

Reyes signed Special Order No. 1063 yesterday which abolished the post of undersecretary for forest, mines, environmental management.

Under the new set-up, Reyes will himself be running field operations and the line bureaus, particularly the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) and the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), with the assistance of Assistant Secretary Jeremias Dolino, the former MGB executive director

Reyes and retired Gen. Roy Kyamko, the deputy director of the National Anti-Environment Crime Task Force (NAECTAF), would be on top of environmental law enforcement.

Reyes said the new management structure was meant to promote responsive public service and define the major functions, responsibilities and authorities of the DENR's top brass. *Blanche S. Rivera*

Court-martial of 30 officers starts today

By Dona Pazzibugan

THE COURT-MARTIAL OF 30 MILITARY OFficers accused of plotting a coup last February is to begin today.

The officers led by former Marine commandant Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda, former Scout Rangers commander Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and Marine Col. Ariel Querubin are charged with violations of the Article of War 67 (attempting a mutiny) and Article of War 96 (conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman).

The 30 officers who are to be court-martialed are accused of plotting to overthrow President Macapagal-Arroyo by withdrawing support from her last Feb. 24.

Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano, chief of the Armed Forces Southern Luzon Command (Solcom), said he would convene the court at 9 a.m. today at Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal.

Lim and the 18 other accused Scout Ranger officers are being held in a maximum security detention facility in the Tanay camp, which is the headquarters of the Army's 2nd Infantry Division.

Miranda, Querubin and the 11 other accused Marine officers will be taken to Camp Capinpin from their respective detention places in Fort Bonifacio and Fort San Felipe, Cavite City.

The court expects to be able to conduct the arraignment today unless any one of the accused officers pose a "peremptory challenge" to the members of the general court-martial.

Not true

Yano, who has been designated president of the seven-member panel, said it was not true that he was postponing the hearings because of the military's active involvement in retrieval and relief operations in typhoon-ravaged areas of Bicol.

"We can handle different tasks at the same time," he said.

The other members of the court are Rear Admiral Emilio Marayag, Commodore Fortunato Sagudo Jr., Brig. Gen. Raul Caballes, Brig. Gen. Salvador Collantes, Brig. Gen. Rolando Capacia and Col. Marian Aliedo who will serve as the law member.

AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. ordered the court-martial of the 30 officers last Nov. 21, while clearing eight other officers who were similarly implicated in the failed coup plot.

Esperon overruled the recommendation of a pre-trial investigation panel to dismiss the mutiny charges against the 38 officers who were investigated.

The other officers facing court-martial are Col. Orlando de Leon, Col. Januario Caringal, Col. Armando Bañez; Lieutenant Colonels Valentin Hizon, Custodio Parcon, Achilles Segumalian and Romulo Gualdrapa; Maj. Francisco Fernandez and 1st Lt. Belinda Ferrer of the Marines; and Lieutenant Colonels Nestor Flordeliza and Edmundo Malabanjot, Majors Jason Aquino and Jose Doctolero, Captains James Sababan, Montano Almodovar, Joey Fontiveros, Ruben Guinolbay, Isagani Criste, William Upano, Dante Langkit, Allan Aurino, Frederick Sales, First Lieutenants Ervin Divinagracia, Jacon Cordero, Homer Estolas, Sandro Sereno and Richiemel Caballes of the Scout Rangers.

Ople 3rd death anniversary today

THE THIRD DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF THE late statesman and Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople will be observed by his family, friends and associates today with a 9 a.m. Mass at the Libingan ng mga Bayani.

A whole-day jobs fair, mobile passport service and gift-giving program are also scheduled in Hagonoy, Bulacan, for the senator's beloved townmates, courtesy of Hagonoy Mayor Felix Ople.

"At this time of political strife, his eloquence and wisdom are sorely missed," former Undersecretary Susan Ople of the Blas F. Ople Policy Center said.

Secretary Ople would have been among the first to advise the administration to desist from revising the Constitution in haste and through questionable means, his youngest daughter said. The former constitutional commissioner, senator and secretary of foreign affairs would never agree to hasty shortcuts to constitutional change.

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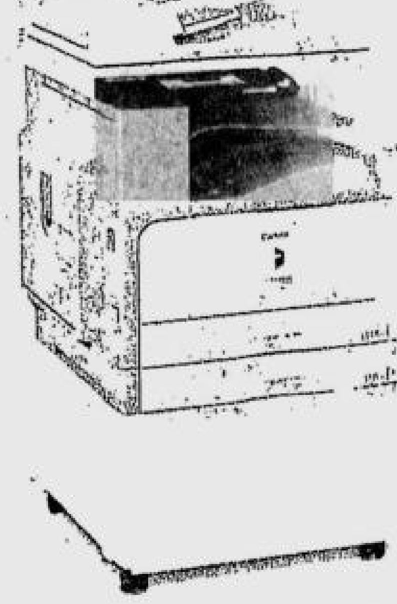

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TV NETWORK	PROGRAM	DATE	TIME
VBN Channel 4	The Score Part 1	December 14, 2006	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	The Score Part 2	December 15, 2006	8:00 PM - 8:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16, 2006	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
RPN	The Score Part 1	December 14, 2006	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	The Score Part 2	December 15, 2006	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16, 2006	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
CABLE CHANNEL	PROGRAM	DATE	TIME
Jolo Cable Network Channel 2	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Magundanao Skycable Cotabato City Channel 3	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Bongao Cable Tawi-Tawi Channel 3	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
CPU Alumni Metro Iloilo City Channel 3	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
PECBC - Medina, Misamis Oriental Ch 4	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Jolo Cable Network Channel 7	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
DYPR (ABS-CBN) Palawan Channel 7	The Score	December 14 & 15	6:00 PM - 6:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	5:30 PM - 6:30 PM
Kismet Cable Pagadian City Channel 8	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
ABS-CBN Pagadian, Zamboanga Channel 9	The Score	December 14 & 15	5:30 PM - 6:00 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	4:30 PM - 5:30 PM
ABS-CBN Ozamis, Misamis Occidental Channel 9	The Score	December 14 & 15	5:30 PM - 6:00 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	4:30 PM - 5:30 PM
DEARBC Cable TV Manolo Fortich Bukidnon Ch 10	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Fil Products Butuan City, Nasipit Channel 17	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Gemstar Cable San Francisco, Agusan del Sur Channel 17	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Orient Cable Dipolog City Channel 18	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

TV NETWORK	PROGRAM	DATE	TIME
IBC	The Score Part 1	December 14, 2006	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	The Score Part 2	December 15, 2006	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16, 2006	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
2nd AVENUE	The Score Part 1	December 14, 2006	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	The Score Part 2	December 15, 2006	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16, 2006	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
CABLE CHANNEL	PROGRAM	DATE	TIME
JVL Star Cable TV – Sultan Kudarat Channel 2	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Tri-Ex – Virac, Catanduanes Channel 2	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Marinduque Cable – Marinduque Channel 3	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
New City Cable TV – Isabela Channel 3	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Salum Cable – Northern Samar Channel 3	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Camiguin Island Cable TV – Mambajao, Mahinog, Camiguin Channel 4	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Caceres Cable TV – Naga City Channel 4	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Tabuk Kalinga Apayao Channel 6	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Eagle Vision – Bantay, Ilocos Sur Channel 6	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Nabunturan Cable TV – Nabunturan, Montevista & Compostela Channel 6	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Asian Vision Cable – Lucena City & Tayabas, Quezon Channel 6	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Misamis Cable TV – Oroquieta, Jimenez, Ozamis, Tudela, Aloran Channel 7	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Cordillera CATV Network – Kalinga Apayao Channel 8	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
L&S Cable – San Jose, Occidental Mindoro Channel 8	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Tamaraw TV Net – Calapan, Oriental Mindoro Channel 10	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Reliance Cable – Catarman, Northern Samar Channel 13	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Lagawe Multi-Purpose Coop – Lagawe Ifugao Channel 15	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Solsona Cable TV – Solsona, Ilocos Norte Channel 15	The Score	December 14 & 15	7:00 PM - 7:30 PM
	Ang Kasagutan	December 16	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM

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OPINION

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In the dark

EDITORIAL

THE PERFECT STORM THE ARROYO ADMINISTRATION thought to be a perfect excuse to call off the summit meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation, scheduled for this week, has proven to be a perfect nonstarter. No one really believed there was real cause for concern that "Seniang" would leave some heads of government all wet and soggy or that President Macapagal-Arroyo needed to focus on the rescue and relief efforts the typhoon would leave in its wake. After all, the weather bureau was saying the summit could go on as scheduled even as the Asean-Philippines National Organizing Committee was telling the foreign delegates, who had arrived early, to pack up and go.

Indeed "Seniang" tore through parts of the Visayas over the weekend, but like the weatherman predicted, it left unscathed the summit venue, Cebu City. Instead what it left in tatters were the credibility of Philippine officials, the capacity of the Philippine government to secure its guests and the reputation for stability and hospitality of a place that is only beginning to appear on the maps of international tourists.

At first, it looked as if the government had called off the summit to stave off possibly ugly confrontations between the police and demonstrators opposing the mad rush to change the Constitution by the administration and its allies in the House of Representatives. In fact, the announcement of the summit's postponement came soon after the country's Catholic bishops called for nationwide mass rallies to denounce the administration-backed campaign. But now more people tend to believe it was something more sinister than an approaching storm or a coming political turbulence that caused the sudden, unilateral decision to call off the summit.

"Considering the size of the typhoon and that it passed by Sunday morning, the reason for the rescheduling was difficult to understand," Japanese Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Akira Amari wrote on his blog. He noted that the media had speculated that "the real reason might have been the warnings of a high possibility of terrorist attacks, released not only by Britain but also by the United States immediately before the events." Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen painted an even more scary scenario, saying he would have been in the Philippines this week for the summit but "terrorists threatened to launch an attack."

The day before Filipino officials announced the postponement of the summit, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia issued identical travel advisories telling their citizens not to travel to Cebu, saying terrorists were in the "final stages" of planning attacks in the summit site. The US Embassy in Manila warned that a terrorist group "may be planning to carry out a terror attack in Cebu."

Security officials dismissed the reports outright, with National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales saying that terrorists may "have the intention but not the capability" to carry out their threats. A military spokesman said they had gotten information about the planned terrorist attacks but had not received "any validated threat."

When Filipino officials announced the summit's postponement, they insisted that the terrorist threat was not part of the reason. "This decision was based on this weather disturbance and on this disturbance only," the chairman of the organizing committee, Marciano Paynor, stressed.

All of them now appear to have been lying. The warnings issued by some Western governments meant that they considered the threat credible. Unless these governments considered the threat serious, it would have been extremely undiplomatic and unfriendly on their part to issue such unflattering advisories on the eve of an important international gathering. The disclosure of the terrorist threat, and the suggestion that the Philippine government was incapable of thwarting it, gave the country a black eye internationally.

What is even worse is that to this day the government continues to keep the Filipino people in the dark about a matter affecting not only their country's reputation but their security as well. The Filipino people deserve to be told what the threat was and how serious it was. They ought to know what has been done to neutralize it. Cebuanos, in particular, have to be assured that they can sleep soundly after their city's international debut was ruined by gatecrashers with murder and mayhem in their minds.

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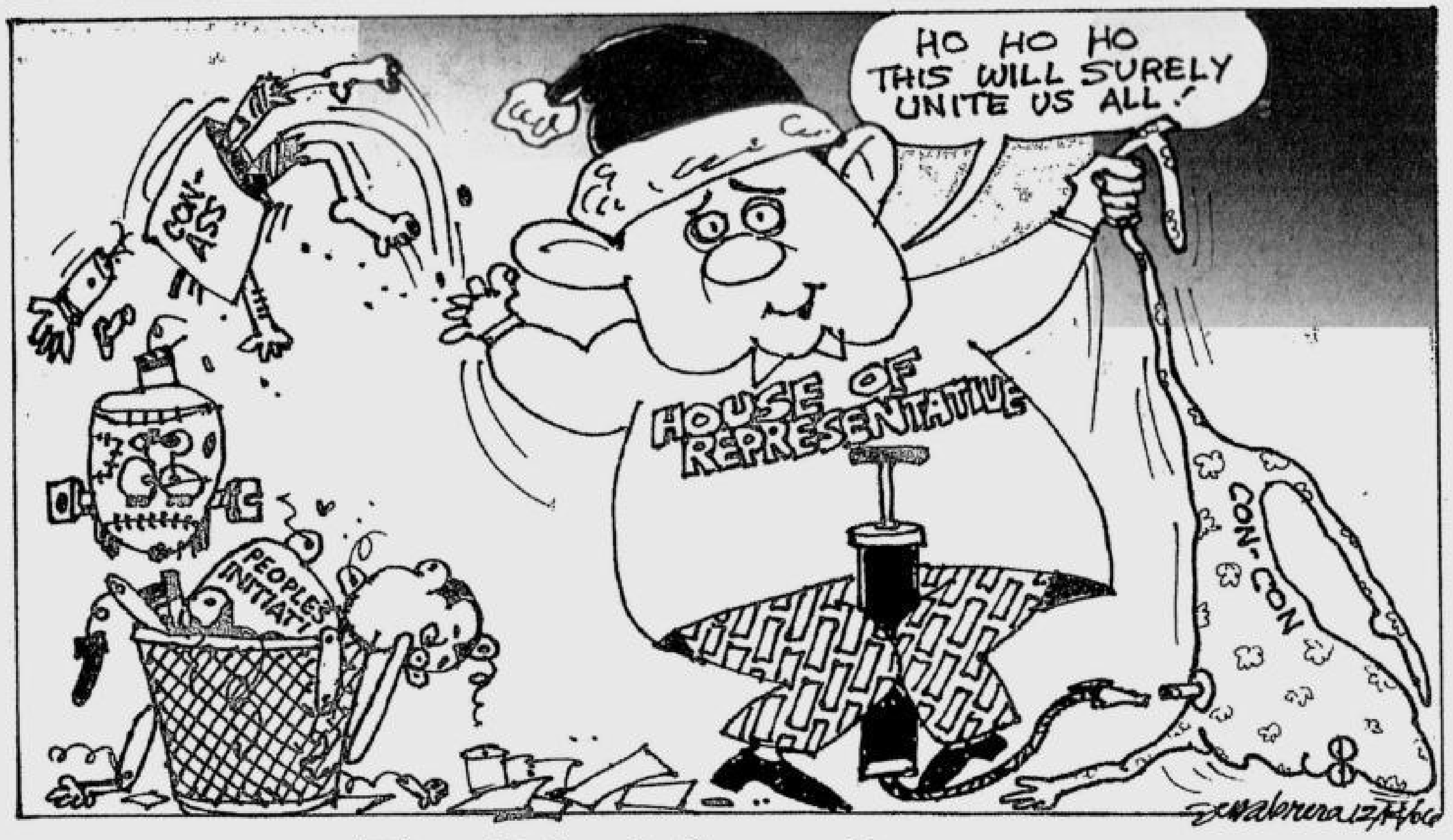


The 'Magi' from Congress

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"ALL IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS" INSIST congressional leaders Jose de Venecia, Prospero Nograles and Constantino Jaraula, as they trudge, bearing gifts, just like the three Magi of old. *May tatlong hari nag sidalaw* (Three kings came to pay homage) is the lilting refrain from the hijacked 1933 Cebuano carol: *Kasadya Ning Takna-a* (How joyous is this moment).

They are the House of Representative's Gaspar, Melchor and Baltazar. They heft presents resembling those that Isaiah, Psalm 72 and Matthew spoke about: myrrh, frankincense and gold. Are these for real?

The House majority's gift of "gold" has strings attached. It will scuttle the plan for a constituent assembly to rewrite the Constitution. And they may give a long-refused embrace to a constitutional convention whose delegates, the Senate suggests, should be elected in sync with the 2007 barangay polls.

Already, 100 of 161 representatives who voted for con ass have abandoned ship, scalded by the furious outburst of citizens' protests. Rep. Antonio Cuenco, for example, apologized for "playing along." But the House will "take its sweet time" about the convention plan, De Venecia and his fellow Magi grumble. They'll hang on, *kapit-tuko*, to their con-ass blueprint.

Makati's Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr., however, predicts that the resolution "will be buried Friday." Both the Senate and the House should bring the curtains down their respective Cha-cha shows, "so the nation can achieve closure on this divisive issue before Christmas," adds Sen. Ralph Recto.

The representatives' less-than-affectionate cuddle is understandable. A convention will be independent of either House, Senate or Malacañang. A Con-con will set its own agenda, rules and timetable for discussions. This power waters down congressional control.

Our political elites, however, are leery of others poking into their fiefdoms. That would loosen their stranglehold on power. This mindset underpins the workings of dynasties: Macapagal-Arroyos, Cojuangcos, Marcoses Estradas, Duranos, Osmeñas, down to family clusters in many of the country's 41,993 barangays.

Politics here has wild swings. "Put yourself in the shoes of Imelda Marcos," suggests Jonathan Watts of the Guardian. Once "one of the 10 richest women in the world," she hobnobbed with the world's dictators and owns "arguably the biggest private collection of art—and footwear—on the planet." Now, she's a widow, accused of theft, ridiculed across the world. It's rough when "many of your shoes have been confiscated. And as if that is not enough, you have gained as many extra pounds as years."

Myrrh symbolizes pain, scholars tell us .... Jettisoning the chance to shred the constitutional cap on reelection hurts. "There's no such restriction in a parliamentary system," salivates Representative Jaraula whose term of office is ending. Representatives Clavel Asas Martinez, Antonio Yapha and Simeon Kintanar must revive their plan to dismember Cebu province into four, for them to run in Lilliputian provinces to be dwarf governors. "But who needs four governors on one freaking island?" the Freeman daily asked.

The Con-ass will scrap the 2007 elections and stretch the tenure of thousands: from congressmen, mayors, councilors to barangay tanods—whose terms are petering out. Now, they must contest the May 2007 elections. "Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few," George Bernard Shaw once said. But as the scarred legislators ruefully admit, taking away the vote is a threshold only fools try to rush across.

And "frankincense"? Well, the majority dumped that toothless 72-hour ultimatum issued by the Speaker, demanding that the Senate call for a convention—or else. Or else what? Nothing, murmurs De Venecia. Co-equals do not threaten each other. "On the eve of Christmas, all the majority desired was to unite the country .... We're not insensitive to public opinion," he added.

In this case, it was the clenched-teeth fury of citizens over raw self-seeking. And in the spirit of the season, thousands will rally this coming Sunday, to remind the representatives that the Nativity is about integrity, not grand larceny. Or as the 1843 "Christmas Carol's Ebenezer Scrooge snorts: "Humbug."

The congressional Magi grumble even as they offer to make a 180-degree turn. Does an alert, articulate citizenry then function like the Nativity "star"? They shed light despite the miasma of Herod-like greed, bureaucratic blindness and Roman legion (military) dominance?

The Con-ass fiasco demonstrates check and balance—offered by citizens and anchored on media coverage—against official abuse. This light is vital for a Philippines where self-seeking has metastasized down to the barangays.

In Dumaguete City, 28 out of 30 barangays didn't bother to settle their cash advances—until the Negros Chronicle published the Commission on Audit report. Breathing threats of libel, the officials scrambled to settle. It is an abuse replicated in Cebu, San Carlos, Davao and Dagugan, etc.

Historically-unprecedented revenues have been made available by the Local Government Code, INQUIRER Manolo Quezon has pointed out. Beyond slurping at this public trough, most LGUs failed to harness them for critically needed development programs. And the press continues to under-report this vital sector.

"Christmas time is the only time I know of … when men and women … think of people below them as if they really were fellow passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys," Charles Dickens once wrote. Perhaps, the Magis from Congress forgot that.

(e-mail : juanlmercado@gmail.com)

Elections are the heart of democracy

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THERE'S ONE EVEN MORE COMPELLING reason to junk Charter change in whatever form it will take between now and the May elections. That is quite apart from its humongous bane in the form of keeping the same congressmen in power forever and giving Jose de Venecia a backdoor to Malacañang. That reason is that at no time than today has the need for (clean) elections become more obdurate. At no time than today has the need for (clean) elections become more life-and-death.

Nobody seems to appreciate the importance of elections anymore. But they are the lifeblood of freedom, they are the heart of democracy.

The depreciation of elections is readily shown in one question I keep getting to this day: "But if not GMA, whom would you rather have in Malacañang?" That is a question I get almost without fail in forums—and I make it a point to talk pretty much only to the kids, they still have the capacity to listen. That was the first question I got during a gathering of first-time voters several weeks ago. Whom would you rather have in lieu of GMA?

My answer to that question has always been, and will always be: That is not for me to say. That is not for you to say. That is for the Filipino voters to say. That is why we have elections. That is why we consider ourselves a democracy: Because we have elections, because we choose our leaders. My beef with GMA is precisely that she has not been voted president by the voters. Who to have instead of her is someone who is voted president by the voters.

I've said that repeatedly in my columns. But I now suspect the reason that point isn't being grasped is not just that we refuse to think things through but that we've reached a point where elections no longer matter to us. We've reached a point where we've gotten cynical about elections. We've reached a point where we now distrust elections. We figure the choice of leaders is best left to "enlightened minds."

I've heard that in other forums, some people I've always thought sensible springing up from their seats to say they wouldn't mind elections being scrapped altogether.-The reason for it being that elections merely compel us to choose between two sets of rogues, the *trapos* and the entertainers. Elections, if they are clean, produce only Eraps, and who the hell wants that. And elections, if they are not clean, produce only GMAs, and who the hell wants that too. Might as well do away with them.

I suspect the reason GMA has succeeded in clinging on to power is not just her willingness to do so at all costs, including the slaughter of a good portion of the population, but the indifference, if not tacit approval, of the middle class for what she has done. That has been expressed explicitly by some of her supporters in this extreme form: "Of course, she cheated. So what? Good for her, she prevented FPJ from taking over the country." The first time I saw that, which was on the pages of this newspaper in a feedback from Online, presumably from a Filipino living in the United States, I nearly fell off my seat. I thought it would be protested bitterly. But, no, I heard variations of it elsewhere. The attitude was: Might as well look at the cheating with benign indifference.

I suspect the problem goes very deep, to an elite and middle class fear and anger at the thought of being held hostage by the "dumb, ignorant and corruptible" masses, ready and eager to sell their votes at elections. A fear and anger exacerbated over the last decade by the unprecedented success of actors and singers, basketball players and media personalities, at the polls. Which culminated in Erap rubbing Joe de V's nose in the mud, a thing Joe de V never forgave him for, and for which he now wants vengeance—never mind if he rubs the nation's nose in the mud along with it.

It's a scary pass, and every time I hear the thought, I tell people there's one thing I know that's far more frightening than elections. That is no elections.

That was our condition during martial law. There were no elections then, or no real elections, the results being foregone. The plebiscites in particular were so, Marcos constantly getting 99.9 percent approval from the people—which is the same kind of plebiscite Joe de V wants to have. And that is our condition today, at least after 2004. Even Marcos was capable of going through the motions of having elections—in 1978, 1981 and 1986, all of which he—or his minions—won handily. The last precipitating the Edsa Revolt. You have no clean elections, you have no elections.

You have a tyranny.

The worst elections are always better than no elections at all. Clean elections that produce Erap are always better than no elections that produce Marcos or dirty elections that produce GMA. If the problem is that our elections only trot out bad choices, then the solution is to work to produce better choices, not to scrap elections. But while at this, I am not so sure we always have bad choices. The last elections offered other choices than GMA and FPJ—Raul Roco and Eddie Villanueva were two of them. We kept saying they were not "winnable." The problem is not out there, it is right here, in our hearts. Or minds.

Elections, in fact, are not unlike democracy itself. Democracy is a terrible system, as Winston Churchill once said.

Except that everything else is worse.

* * *

If you have time, a bit of cash, and a heart, drop by My Brother's Mustache at near Scout Madriñan, QC, tonight. There's a benefit for Chikoy and Monet Pura's nephew Marco Quimpo who has cancer. Your presence will help in his treatment, and you will treat yourself to large helpings of music from Chikoy Pura, Noel Cabangon, Rom Dongeto, Cooky Chua, Susan Fernandez, Lester Demetillo, Mon Espia, and others. Show starts at 9 p.m.

Unprecedented unity in House

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

WITH METRO MANILA UNDER SUNNY SKIES last Monday, the postponement of the Asean and East Asia Summit in Cebu was viewed by some quarters as an embarrassment to the country. Some said that summit participants would find it difficult to come in January. Cebu City Mayor Tommy Osmeña felt the postponement was unnecessary and that if the decision were left to the Cebuanos, they would have gone ahead. All this, however, is just Monday morning quarterbacking. What's important to stress is that Boracay and Aklan were frightfully devastated by Seniang, with resorts destroyed, lives lost and power knocked out completely. Aklan was placed under a state of calamity.

True, what was hoisted over Cebu was typhoon signal No. 1 only, but typhoons have a way of veering off or hitting where they're not expected. Recall that Metro Manila braced up for "Reming" two weeks ago, but the typhoon hit Batangas and Mindoro instead. Had Seniang hit Cebu, how would the authorities have moved out at least 5,000 people, including heads of state? GMA would have been criticized for endangering their lives. Postponing the summit was a prudent decision.

* * *

A remarkable thing is happening in the House. Due to the outcry against a "Con-ass without the Senate," the House majority decided to shelve the idea and instead push for a constitutional convention, with delegates to be elected in the May 2007 elections in order to save about P2.5 billion. The Con-con resolution is unprecedented as it has united the House. It is sponsored by opposition Representatives Ronaldo Zamora, Agapito Aquino and Rolex Suplico as well as pro-administration Representatives Abraham Mitra, Antonio Cuenco and Raul del Mar. One hundred ninety members of the rainbow coalition approved this resolution in caucus last Monday, but to avoid charges of "railroading," it will be submitted to the proper committee, and the needed two-thirds vote to adapt it formally is expected to breeze through the plenary before the House adjourns for Christmas or, at the latest, by early January.

* * *

The sad part, however, is that the senators, threatened by the abolition of their chamber, continue to stonewall. Their latest excuse for their inaction is that the Con-con resolution should be passed after the May elections. But they know only too well that it would take a miracle for the new senators, who will spend P300 million to get elected this May, to agree to a Con-con.

The enlightened leaders of the Church, business and other sectors should help coax the senators into approving the Con-Con resolution now, as it would be next to impossible to do it after the May 2007 or 2010 elections. Some Church leaders say more time is needed to explain the issues properly to the people, but there is still about seven months to do this until a Con-con is convened by July next year. That's more than ample time.

A startling report in Philippine Star last Monday quoted Timoteo Soriano Jr., the driver of the van where Nicole was allegedly raped, as saying there was no rape, that Nicole walked into the van by herself and that she was not dead-drunk. These statements of the driver, who was never called by the defense lawyers, should open a whole new vista for this case which is now on appeal before the Court of Appeals. With this new information, the lawyers of the convicted marine could call for a serious review of the case.

* * *

The Edsa Shrine Rectors Council promises a "very unique way" of celebrating Christmas to coincide with the shrine's 17th anniversary, called "Edsa Diwa ng Pasko." Wellspring of Life Catholic Charismatic Community, the organization tasked with implementing this project, will focus on the theme of sharing between the poor and the affluent. "Edsa Diwa" will feature a giant "Christmas Tree of Life" adorned with 1,000 coconut seedlings, donated by the Philippine Coconut Authority, symbolizing the Filipinos' resilience and everyday needs as well as their deep-rooted devotion to the Virgin Mary and their faith in her Son. Each coconut seedling will be sponsored by corporate and individual donors at P1,000 each, and the amount raised will be given to the Tulay ng Kabataan Foundation. In turn, indigent children under Tulay are making 1,000 Christmas lanterns which will adorn the shrine's perimeter. Corporate and individual donors and organizations will donate P100 for each lantern, and the funds will also be turned over to the foundation.

The Christmas Tree of Life will be lighted and blessed in a ceremony to be led by Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales tomorrow, Dec. 15, with the Edsa Choir performing. Wish lists will also be made by the shrine's parishioners and presented during the Dec. 23 Mass at the shrine. This will be followed by a party for the underprivileged children of Payatas and Smokey Mountain, to be hosted by Arnel Ignacio. To be given away are 17 "Edsa Shrine Carts" containing items for a start-up neighborhood business.

* * *

A most interesting group art exhibit is being held until Dec. 18 at the Ayala Museum on Makati Ave., Makati City. On exhibit are the modern bronze horse sculptures of Taal Mayon. There are also paintings of the talented Gonzales family, led by former Amb. Rafael Zules Gonzales, which includes his brother Ben Gonzales, the latter's son Guy D. Gonzalez, niece Nickette G. McKeever, grandnephew Cibbie Gonzales and grand niece Lyriel Gonzales. Ralph Gonzales, who served in the foreign service for 45 years, is a natural-born painter and sculptor. In addition to his academic studies in engineering, business, economics and political science, this versatile former diplomat took up military courses in the Armed Forces as well as ceramic art in the Brooklyn Museum Art School. He has held a number of exhibits in various parts of the world and is a member of the Saturday Group of painters. Congratulations to the Gonzaleses.

Climate change, the bigger enemy

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

WHILE THE PHILIPPINES WAS REELING FROM its yearly dose of typhoons, the worst of which struck recently, something related was happening elsewhere. The Twelfth Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Second Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol was taking place at the UN office in Nairobi, Kenya from Nov. 6 to 17.

Kenya's vice president Moody Awori told the delegates: "We are gathered this morning on behalf of humankind because we acknowledge that climate change is rapidly emerging as one of the most serious threats humanity will ever face."

On a local scale for us, first, it was typhoon "Milenyo," then came "Reming," then "Seniang"—all within a span of a month or two, and the last two typhoons within a week of each other. It was as if these howlers were trying to be in synch with the political storm that has been buffeting this "be-stormed" and benighted country these past months.

After the skies had cleared and the body count had begun, there was the usual blame-throwing. To Phivolcs: Were the warnings loud enough and the mudslide-prone areas warned? To the local governments: Were the warnings relayed to the communities concerned? To the residents: Why didn't you heed the warnings? To despoilers and destroyers of forest covers: You must pay for the destruction you have wrought. And so forth and so on.

In the din of cries of grief and despair, amid the cacophony of fault-finding and blame-throwing, and in the happy hum of the steady stream of aid that was pouring in, there was a little voice, inaudible almost, that rose. I don't remember now who said it, but I certainly heard it. The bigger enemy, someone said (I think it was a scientist who said it) is climate change. And it is bigger than the short-term solutions being presented on the ground.

Like, yes, we have natural weather occurrences that shouldn't have resulted in such huge disasters if only .... But these occurrences and their consequences are just raindrops when compared with the bigger global enemy that is climate change. Bigger in the sense that it affects the whole planet Earth and all its inhabitants—young and old, rich and very rich, poor and very poor, powerful and powerless. It is bigger than politics and national boundaries, bigger than ideological, religious and ethnic strifes—though I might say that all these human concerns also have something to contribute, directly or indirectly, to the meteorological problems of this planet. For the deadly wastes we send up to the atmosphere come down in a deadly way upon our heads and homes, on towns and cities, on hills and valleys. And it is mostly the poorest that are worst hit.

Fr. Sean McDonagh, author of many books on the environment and former resident of the Philippines, has come up with another book, his nth—"Climate Change: The Challenge to Us All." Two years ago he wrote "The Death of Life: The Horror of Extinction."

I have yet to get a copy of McDonagh's recent opus but I learned that it got good reviews. I also received a copy of his essay "Climate Change: The Urgent Challenge to All." I think "urgent" is the key word here.

Climate change has been in the international agenda since the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, McDonagh reminds. What has happened since then? Politicians have merely been paying lip service and have not confronted the problem because their advisers believe it would take probably 100 years before the effects of climate change would be felt, that these wouldn't happen during their watch.

Well, many politicians and world leaders who were alive in 1992 are still around and they are seeing for themselves the drastic changes in the past few years.

In 2004, Sir David King, the chief scientific adviser to the British government said that "the problems arising from global warming are the biggest challenges facing governments." McDonagh says scientists and scientific bodies around the world have since issued dire warnings about the effects of climate change on weather patterns, ocean habitats and flooding, biodiversity and access to potable water. Speaking of water, Metro Manila has been experiencing what waterless means, with a weather official hoping "Seniang" would blow into Central Luzon so the waters of Angat would be replenished.

It's like choosing between a rock and a hard place, between death by drowning or death by thirst.

McDonagh says that Sir Nicholas Stern's review of the "Economics of Climate Change" (October 2006) constitutes the last piece of the jigsaw puzzle in terms of making a cast iron case for aggressively addressing global warming. With a combination of political leadership, the proper mix of carrot and stick in carbon tax to reflect the true cost of energy and support for new technologies, we could avoid the worst in climate change, he says.

A low-carbon economy, McDonagh suggests, will offer new possibilities for business that could run to billions of dollars per year. It can no longer be "business as usual" while we are experiencing drastic extreme weather conditions, melting ice caps, rising ocean levels and massive extinction of the species.

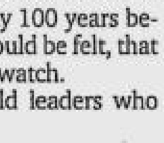
While the Bush administration has not signed the Kyoto protocol, a number of US states and cities are willing to sign a Kyoto-like protocol beyond 2012, and everyone wishes growing economies like China, India and Brazil would also sign up to limiting greenhouse gas emissions after 2012.

Climate change is not just a scientific and economic issue. It is a moral one.

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

All that glittered was the gold

THE LONG VIEW



Manuel L. Quezon III

WHAT IS THE WORD TO DESCRIBE THE HOUSE leadership's excusing its own behavior by insisting that a constituent assembly was primarily a money-saving measure? "Unbelievable." What the House attempted was a power grab. When the public remonstrated with passion, the House did what lizards do to save their necks: it abandoned its tail in the hope that the wriggling stump would confuse its critics.

That sacrificial stump is the House's current proposal for the holding of a constitutional convention. Neither sincere nor practical, the proposal's sole aim is to "turn the tables" on the critics of the House; and, contrary to what the House would have people believe, not to uphold the larger sense of country or the public good. The House was willing to change its rules, provoke a constitutional crisis, and risk a political crisis, for billions of pragmatic reasons.

I consulted the ill-fated (because it was never passed) 2006 Budget Appropriations Act and this is what it contained in bold strokes.

Item one. Budget for the House of Representatives (for general administration and support, and operations, including locally funded projects, as directed hereunder, and including the House electoral tribunal): P3,196,058,000. This is what the House wanted in 2006 to keep Douglas Cagas, Luis Villafuerte, Edcel Lagman and friends in the clover.

Item two. Budget for the Senate of the Philippines (as above, and with the Senate electoral tribunal): P1,366,052,000. This is the price we pay for the services of senators—from the brilliant to the harmless, none of whom has provoked a constitutional crisis. The Senate spends annually what Sec. Raul Gonzalez's Department of Justice does (P1,386,756,000), except that the Senate invites people to speak their minds, while Gonzalez throws them in jail or keeps them from testifying. And two senators have given up their pork barrels; no congressman has.

Item three. Budget for the Office of the President and the Vice President of the Philippines: P3,666,569,000 (of which P128,628,000 is the Vice-President's budget).

Item four. Total Budget for line and other executive departments and agencies (DAR, DOH, DND, etc.): P215,617,956,000 (of which "other executive offices" amounts to P3,010,655,000). That's 22 departments and a further alphabet soup of agencies.

The House spends twice as much as the Senate, the President spends as much as the House; the House and President combined spend nearly five times more than what the Senate spends. So let's begin with the savings of government if the Senate were eliminated (which is what the House and the President want): about P1.5 billion.

Now let us see what the House gains once the executive and legislative functions are joined in a unicameral parliament; in other words, the House, OP and OVP budgets combined, which would have to be shared with a Prime Minister: almost P4 billion.

And let us add the budgets of the line agencies that would be under the supervision and control of Cabinet ministers appointed by the President from the members of the unicameral parliament (i.e., your congressman-turned-parliamentarian and future minister of state). Let us also add the budgets of the other executive agencies whose heads would be appointed by a Prime Minister and his Cabinet, or by the President and a Prime Minister: almost P216 billion.

And so, under a unicameral-parliamentary government, the House would gain access to close to P220 billion while the country would save P1.5 billion. That's based on the proposed 2006 budget drawn up by the House, which is less than the present proposed 2007 budget of over a trillion pesos.

If the numbers are too huge to comfortably imagine, think of it in terms of jobs available to the members of the House, and the patronage positions its members can dispense, with or without further deals with the President.

The "staffing summary" portion of the proposed 2006 budget said that the "key executive positions" in the Office of the President numbered 186 (the executive secretary, etc.); "other" positions total 1,977. And assuming the future Parliament would have the same seats as the existing House's 238, that practically guarantees an executive position for every congressman. And with close to 2,000 jobs that the Parliament could farm out, its members would enjoy lots of room for patronage negotiations.

In contrast, eliminating the vice president's office (15 key positions, 97 others) and the Senate (186 key positions, 1,977 others), would result in a minimal trimming of government jobs, while leaving untouched the House's 609 key positions and 3,053 other jobs.

This was what last week was about, and why the rush to convene a constituent assembly is so urgent for the Speaker and his friends, but a false emergency for the rest of the country. They are now alarmed that the Sunshine Coalition has turned into a "sunset coalition," after investing political and other capital in a gamble that spectacularly failed; yet they insist that the country must continue the reckless stampede they began, although now they are directing the stampede to head for a different direction.

Consensus cannot be rushed. When forced, it results in the hardening of initial positions. The House blundered, blinded by the prospects of finally having unhampered access to the public treasury. The House majority members do not deserve any benefit of the doubt for the duration of this 13th, and most disgraceful, Congress of our Republic.

Were there a revamp of the Comelec, maybe—just maybe—constitutional changes could be discussed. Otherwise any constitutional proposal would be like the false choice forced on our people in 1973: *pancit* or fried chicken? A new constitution!

Beyond commuting

YOUNG BLOOD

Bernice Tenchavez

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I MISS HIGH SCHOOL. I MISS BEING 16 WHEN THE FUture had endless possibilities and mind games consisted of just Tetris and Monopoly. But here I am 10 years later, not too much of a cynic, but not too idealistic either. And I wonder if the high schoolers know what they're up against.

Feeling nostalgic recently, I looked into my high school website, expecting insightful articles about the new generation. I came upon an article compiled by my former teacher, entitled "Confessions of A High School First-Time Commuter." Seriously? Is this what high schoolers are worried about these days? Are we going to applaud rich kids who took the public transportation for the first time? If girls think that commuting is the Mount Everest of life, then they're in for a surprise.

Some excerpts from the article: "Life will never be the same," says the little girl. (Wait till you get your first job, kid.) "There's a lot of honesty involved" (unlike in relationships), with passengers making sure they paid before getting off. And the driver is quite gifted: He's driving while counting money and giving change. (That reminds me of a guy I know. He was seeing a girl while dating another one and getting away with it.)

Another girl wrote that while her first commuting experience was quite frustrating, she could safely say that she emerged from it getting the street smarts she would possibly need to survive the challenges of the outside world. (Well done, Kasey. Next target is world domination.)

Girls, let if I may: Now that you know how to commute, let me tell you other things school doesn't teach you.

High school relationships don't work out. You won't even be in touch with your prom date. When you fall deeply in love and it doesn't work, then you begin building walls. That's okay. In time, when you meet the right person, the wall will become just a fence. And no matter how much you can't imagine it, you will get over your first heartbreak, your second, your third, and so on. And I mean really and honestly get over it. And yes, it gets easier every time. And no, just because it didn't hurt as much the second time, it doesn't mean you loved him less.

You will fall for a couple of bad boys along the way, and again that's okay. Commitment is now no longer limited to not kissing other people but the obligation to believe in your partner even if you really don't. Look after your best interest if he's not looking after yours. Don't let anyone hold you back.

Your past does not define your future. Just because you didn't do well in high school doesn't mean you will suck in college or in life. The hard workers beat the smart geeks any day—and twice on Sunday. So you need not be smart, just hard-working. There's a lot of politics in the work place no matter how nice you are. Take everything in stride.

Things happen for a reason, and that's the beauty of hindsight. You may see the past as something that holds you back or as a great (maybe painful) learning experience. I hope you choose the latter and move on.

You'll meet someone who will challenge your faith, your beliefs and the way you see yourself (it could happen at 1 p.m. in Goldilocks). No one can destroy your self esteem without your permission. If you know who you are, you'd be surprise how the words that come out of your mouth seem to have a life of their own.

Sometimes, you will spend a good weekday eating in a fine dining restaurant and bitching, with your cynical friends, about life and how sweet couples disgust you. Enjoy it.

A life-altering moment may come after you watch "Garden State." So be it.

You will have pre-prom déjà vu again. At 16, you diet before the prom and decide what to wear and can't wait to see the look of your crush when he sees you. At 26, you will diet to death before the wedding of a friend, decide which dress shows more cleavage and can't wait to see the look of a guy you once dated who'll also be at the wedding.

There'll be a lot to look forward to. Though your circle of friends gets bigger, you can now choose the people you want to waste your time with. Like Sophie, you have a choice.

You will also appreciate your parents more, your health and Lipitor. Enjoy life. Find a mentor, join a band, take lots of photos, shoot a gun, join a breast cancer advocacy, read more and put down that self-help book.

Oh, and I hope you won't be too cynical. True love still exists and I hope you will end up with the one you love.

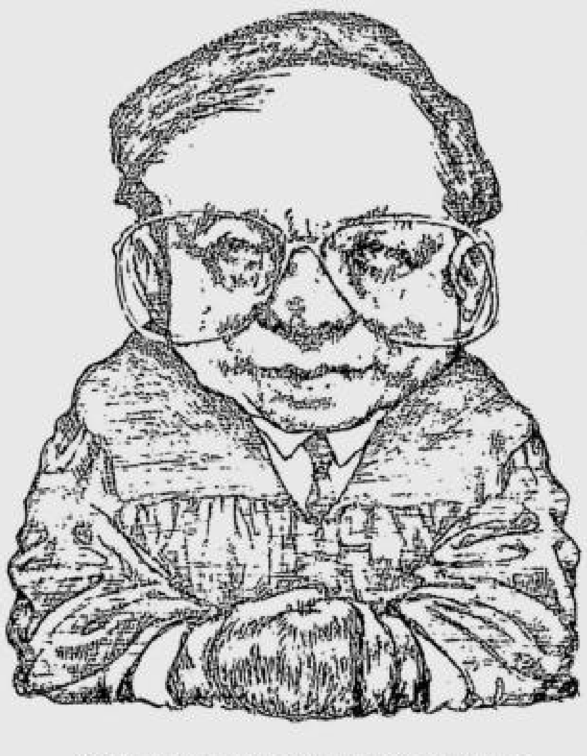
My dear school, aside from teaching the girls to be brave enough to commute, teach them to be brave enough to never settle for second best, to be strong enough to walk away from a dysfunctional relationship, to be brave enough to be alone and to pursue fulfillment instead of a career.

Oh and my self-esteem? I gathered it from believing Dr. Seuss when he said, "Oh, the places you'll go."

So bravely go out to the world, girls. It's okay to commute, hopping from one place to another while making mistakes. Just make sure that at the end of the day, you learn how to drive and navigate a life well lived. The world awaits.

Bernice Tenchavez, 26, used to work in advertising but is now reviewing for her exams, hoping to take her master's abroad.

IN THE NEWS



Chief Justice Reynato Puno

‘House of Spoiled Brats’

THE SUPREME COURT, WITH ITS TIMELESS wisdom and independence, has spoken. Yet like spoiled brats, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Prospero Nograles, Prospero Pichay, Constantino Jaraula, together with other congressmen and INQUIRER columnist Belinda Olivares-Cunanan, insist on Charter change.

JDV even went to the extent of implying that the eight Supreme Court justices who junked the Sigaw ng Bayan petition were ingrates; after all, it was he who “rescued” former Chief Justice Hilario Davide from being impeached. He also accused the eight justices of being biased and “close-minded” for not listening to the Cha-cha advocates. (I guess killing the impeachment bid against President Macapagal-Arroyo was not a biased and “close-minded” act.) There are now reports about plans to file an impeachment complaint against Justice Antonio Carpio, which the House eagerly awaits.

Cunanan, in her Nov. 10 and 28 columns, described the decision of the Supreme Court as “vicious,” “scathing” and “extremely strong and condemnatory.” (I wonder why Cunanan did not consider the words used by Congressmen Edcel Lagman and Luis Villafuerte in describing the impeachment bid against GMA as a “cadaver” and the pro-impeachment congressmen as people out to gain “media mileage” as vicious, scathing, extremely strong and condemnatory—and also unprofessional.)

In her Nov. 11, 16 and 28 columns, she attacked the Senate as a “do-nothing body” and refuted the recent SWS finding that 67 percent of the Filipinos do not want Cha-cha.

I don’t know what Cunanan’s and the pro-Cha-cha congressmen’s problem is. It seems to me that they are retaliating just because the Supreme Court did not satisfy their political whims. Rather than move on (which is their advice to the pro-impeachment lawmakers), they insist on pursuing Cha-cha, thus ironically going against their own counsel and, in effect, telling one and all that the rules that apply to the opposition do not apply to them.

Instead of working like mature professionals, JDV and his cohorts have been acting like spoiled brats. Instead of giving fair and balanced views, Cunanan has been presenting only one side of an issue, while deliberately disregarding the other.

Cunanan has turned herself into an “apologist,” while the pro-Cha-cha congressmen have transformed the House into a “House of Spoiled Brats.”

—MAX TAN,
alaric_max@yahoo.com

A call to vigilance against anti-life House bills

THIS IS IN REACTION TO THE HOUSE bills that are currently under consideration in Congress namely:

1. House Bill No. 3773 (Responsible Parenthood and Population Management) proposing a two-child “ideal” for the Filipino family and requiring government funding for “reproductive health services” including contraception, sterilization and sex education in classrooms.

2. House Bill 5285 (Magna Carta for Women) with reproductive health provisions, including those in House Bill 3773; which espouses gender education, and where the term “gender” rather than “sex” is used, disregarding the differentiation between men and women.

3. House Bill 634 or “The Anti-Discrimination Act” allowing same-sex unions.

4. House Bill 5012, “Providing Private Workers and Employees Women and Gender Education in the Workplace,” requiring private employers to give free annual seminars on women’s rights, development, gender equality, etc.

These House bills threaten the unity of the family as well as the life of the unborn. May we call on the lawmakers to consider the voice/sentiments of the voters who voted them into office and who are against the above-mentioned House bills. The lawmakers are duty-bound to uphold the Constitution which provides for the protection of the family and the unborn. They will do better to direct their attention at curbing graft and corruption, the root cause of our country’s poverty problem.

We ask the citizenry to be vigilant in doing all it can to prevent the passage of the above-mentioned bills. Let’s all join the Congress Vigil for Life held on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 4 p.m.

Quality of life can never be improved at the expense of denying the unborn their right to life. Our Constitution protects the family and upholds respect for life. Pope Paul VI has, likewise, pleaded with the General Assembly of the United Nations: “Respect for life, even with regard to the great problem of the birth rate, must find here in your assembly its highest affirmation and its most reasoned defense. You must strive to multiply bread so that it suffices for the tables of mankind, and not rather favor an artificial control of birth, which would be irrational, in order to diminish the number of guests at the banquet of life.” (Address to the UN, Oct. 4, 1965)

—CHING D. AUNARIO,
15 Panay St., Philamlife Village,
Las Piñas City

PEOPLE power in the making, after the House passed a resolution convening a Senate-less Con-ass?

Cha-cha’s real agenda is GMA’s political survival

THE GO-SIGNAL GIVEN BY GLORIA Macapagal-Arroyo (after the defeat of the people’s initiative at the Supreme Court) to her *trapo* cohorts in Congress, led by Jose de Venecia, to proceed with the Charter change through a constituent assembly is a desperate ploy to avoid facing the people’s wrath and judgment in the May elections next year.

The administration’s all-out push for Cha-cha through Con-ass, even if they have to disregard the Senate, shows a desperate regime fighting for its survival. The fact is GMA is truly afraid of an opposition-dominated Senate and a House of Representatives that has “the number” to impeach her. And these two scenarios are almost a foregone conclusion in next year’s elections as shown by recent opinion surveys.

Cha-cha is the only way for GMA to avoid being impeached, and this is the reason she is ardently going for it at all costs. Her claim that Cha-cha is needed to modernize and keep our political system in step with the developing world is but a smokescreen to hide her real agenda, which is her political survival.

—ROEL GARCIA,
spokesperson, Maypagasa,
roelgarcia_772000@yahoo.com

Discriminatory hiring policies help drive Filipinos abroad

I’M GLAD THAT CONRADO DE QUIROS continues to harp on the subject of continuing migration of Filipino workers. What amazes me is that in the ensuing debate there is absolutely no mention about “affirmative action” or the hiring of workers regardless of age, gender, marital status, or—as happens only in the Philippines—appearance (“attractive,” “fair-complexioned”). One need only to read the wanted ads, especially those requiring the submission of “a smiling photo,” to know what I mean.

Yes, there are jobs available in the Philippines. But as long as local companies practice discriminatory hiring policies, the exodus of otherwise qualified Filipino workers to countries with more egalitarian hiring criteria will continue.

—PERLA LIMBAGA MANAPOL,
firlatot@yahoo.com

A case for re-nationalizing power industry

I COMPLETELY AGREE WITH DR. GIOVANNI Tapang, national chair, AGHAM, in his letter to the editor (PDI 11/22/01) strongly deploring the privatization of our power industry and condemning our continued dependence on foreign investments for our energy requirements.

As an example of just how detrimental this policy is to our national interest, we would like to cite the refusal of Mirant Philippines, which generates electric power, to provide electricity to a petrochemical plant in Batangas on the ground that one of the plant’s investors is Iran. According to an official of Mirant Phils., as a US company, it is prohibited by the US government from having business relations with Iran.

However, the establishment of a petrochemical plant is vital to the Philippine economy, especially in promoting industrialization that creates thousands of jobs and saves our country millions of dollars in foreign exchange that otherwise would be used for the importation of industrial materials. And we have no quarrel with Iran, with which we have normal diplomatic and trade relations.

The decision of Mirant is clearly antagonistic to Philippine national interest and should not be countenanced by a sovereign country. Mirant Phils. is earning huge profits from Filipino consumers and taxpayers who pay it even if it is not producing electricity as an independent power producer (IPP). In fact, Mirant’s mother company in the US has gone bankrupt because of inefficiency and corruption. But Mirant Phils. is solvent, thanks to a sweetheart contract that allows it to extort profits from Filipino consumers and taxpayers.

Mirant is in the process of dissolution, expecting to remit all its profits to the US mother company (which probably needs the money to pay its debts). What the Philippines should do is to prevent Mirant from remitting its profits on the ground that they are unjustly earned, and order it to connect with the petrochemical company so the latter can start hiring people and producing materials for local industries.

Tapang is right, let’s re-nationalize the power industry, and make government fully responsible for supplying the energy needs of our people. It should do this with other basic industries, like water delivery which, after being privatized, has become more inefficient and expensive.

—MANUEL F. ALMARIO,
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Thursday, December 14, 2006

THE BIGGEST DANCE EVENT THIS SEASON!

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Christmas

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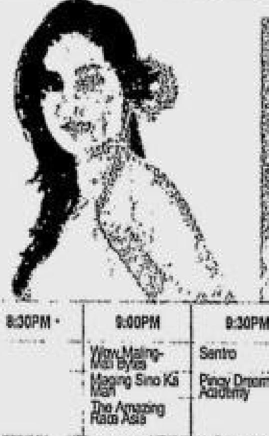

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5	Nickelodeon				TNA Wrestling		Metro		Big News	S.O.S		Hayop Na Hayop		Wow Maling-Mali Bytes	Sentro	The Best Of Dokyu		Araw-Araw Premyo Sa Rasibo	Letty La Mas Fea
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Inocente De Ti	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Beet The Vandel Buster	Pangako Sa 'Yo	TV Patrol World		Kapamilya Deal Or No Deal	Super Inggo (8:15PM)		Maging Sino Ka Man	Pinoy Dream Academy		Bandila	SOCO	Mirada De Mujer
AXN		CSI: Miami (Season 4)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 6)		Ultimate Guinness World Records	Samsung Sports World	Ripley's Believe It or Not		The 4400		Fear Factor (Season VI)		The Amazing Race Asia		Alias (Season V)		Lost (Season II)	
bTV	Biography: Dave Bing	TV Shopping		NBA Jazz @ Clippers					Pac 10				NBA Live	NBA Fantasy Hoops	NBA Jazz @ Clippers				
Cartoon Network																	Aqua Teen Hunger Force		
Cinema One		Mabuting Kaibigan Masamang Kaaway				Espadang Papel				Hostage				Exodus				Sugatang Puso	
Cinemax		The Birds (3:15PM)					Rage Of Honor (5:25PM)			Kiss And Tell				Judicial Consent				Friday The 13th Part III	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	News Asia Global Challenges Inside Middle East CNN Biz Traveller Global Office Global Challenges	Your World Today			
Crime/Suspense		Revelations		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Profiler		Investigative Reports		Law and Order		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Bones		Threshold		E-Ring	
Discovery Channel		Psychic Witness		Man Made Marvels		More Than Human		Deadliest Catch		Extreme Machines		One Step Beyond	Connect	Mythbusters		Man Made Marvels		Power Zone	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Un[illegible] Bunny	Shuriken School	Lilo & Stitch	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Monster Allergy	Shuriken School	Buzz On Maggie	Totally Spies	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Champions League Extra				Women's Pro Billiards '06		English Premier Football League				NFL's Greatest Moments		SportsCenter Asia	World Pool League '05 Poland		World Pool League '05 Poland		SportsCenter Asia
ETC		Beach Girls		Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Will & Grace	Friends	Simple Life 4	Rated Ort 6	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr. Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen DeGeneres Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	Nanny 911		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Makita Ka Lang Muli	Now and Forever	Into The Sun		Dragonball Z	Ghost Fighter	Jewel In The Palace		24 Oras	Captain Barbell	Atlantika (7:45 PM)		Bakekang	A Pinoy Life (9:15PM)		Magpakailanman		Saksi	100% Pinoy
Hallmark Channel				Judging Amy		Just Cause		McLeod's Daughters		Strong Medicine		Dinotopia		Spooks		Wire In The Blood		Regenesis	
HBO			Sahara			Made In Heaven (5:15PM)				Napoleon Dynamite				XXX: The Next Level				Against The Ropes	
Hero TV	Megaman	Sunny Pig	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Saiyuki Reload	Naruto	Monkey Turn	Gundam Seed Destiny	Full Metal Panic	Galaxy Angels	Voltes V Evolution	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Astroboy	Three-Eyed One	Naruto	AmDriver	Megaman	Yu-Gi-Oh GX
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		EBC Earth Files		Japan Video Topics/ Arms		Travel Philippines	Japan Video Topics/ Arms	EBC Earth Files	IBC News Tonite	Metrobal Show	
JackTV		Smackdown				X-Men	The Batman	Experience		Mad TV		Just For Laughs	Scare Tactics	Distraction	Banzai	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Premium Blend	The Late Show David Letterman	
Lifestyle Network	Get Color	Wolfgang Puck	Inside Dish	Rachel Ray		Sensible Chic	At Home With	Barefoot Contessa	Everyday Italian	Martha		Look For Less	Good Finds	Rachel Ray		E! True Hollywood Story		Your Private Island	Genuine Article
MTV Philippines		Handpicked Kwan	VH1 All Access: Older Babes, Younger Guys		Punk'd	The Hills	MTV Hits			Get Spotted	Ultrasound: Kwan	TRL		Punk'd	The Hills	Barrio 19	Sessions: Kwan	VH1 All Access: Awesomely Badder Fashion	
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYX News	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Presents		MYX Bandarito	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXilog
National Geographic		Nat Geographic Specials		Naked Science		Hollywood Scenes		Top 5		Nat Geographic Specials		WOW!		Megastructures		Naked Science		Hollywood Scoop	
NBN					Dives Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Siya	[illegible] W/ Rey Langit & Angelique Lazo		Tinig Ng Bayan		Equilibrium		Teledyaryo Final Edition		World Pool Championship					
Net 25	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	In Focus	Euromaxx	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Tamang Daan		News Beat (Live)		OpenLine Live	Gabay Sa Kalusugan	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Pagbubunyag		World Report	In Focus	DWTV Journal News	Euromaxx
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	Danny Phantom	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Unfabulous	Dark Oracle	The Fairly Odd Parents	All That	Romeo	As Told By Ginger	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Sarah: The Other Side				Ang Pagano				Magdusa Ka				Rocky N Rolly				Jelangkung
Qtv	Pawnshop No. 8	Samurai X	Hikaru No Go	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Winter Sonata	Irene	Emperor Of The Sea	Takeshi's Castle	Family Zoo		News On Q	Women's Desk		Irene	Value Added Treasures
RPN 9	TV Shopping	Dos's Day		Roundtable Discussion	Mr. Fighting	RPN Aksyon Balita		Complete Savages	Jake In Progress	The 4400		Medium		Cold Case		Newswatch Now	P-Max	Kasangga Mo Ang Langit	Police Hour
SBN 21								Sony Music Video				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Friends Again		Sony Music Video	
Solar Sports						Gillette World Sport	Rookie Manual			WPT Tour				Hoop Nation		Sportsdesk		Autofocus	
Star Movies		Pursued (3:05PM)			DeLovely (4:45PM)					Opening Night: Eragon (6:50PM)	The Librarian: Quest For The Spear (7:20PM)			The Librarian 2: Return To King Solomon's Mines			Mr. And Mrs. Smith (10:35PM)		
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Desire Table For Three		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	Hope & Faith	According To Jim	The Office	Two And A Half Men	The Drew Carey Show		Seinfeld	Hope & Faith
Studio 23								Blog	Pinoy Dream Academy	Wazzup Wazzup	Totally Outrageous	Two And A Half Men	Will & Grace	Grey's Anatomy		News Central	Oprah (10:45PM)		MYXilog
UnTV				KNC Show	Kakampi Mo Ang Batas		Kaka at Claire Kasangkay Nyo		Public Hearing	Make My Day		Ang Dating Daan (8:15PM)							

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Bishop urges gov't to end murders

POLICEMEN and their version of a rally for human rights.
VINCENT CABREZA/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

SORSOGON CITY—THE BISHOP OF SORSOGON called on the government to put a stop the series of killings of leftist militants following the murder of a human rights lawyer and a member of the leftist party-list group Bayan Muna.

Bishop Arturo Bastes also said the perpetrators of the killings should be put behind bars.

Bastes said the killing of lawyer Gil Gojol and Bayan Muna member Crisanto Frivaldo showed what he said was the callous attempt by the murders' perpetrators to silence the people and stop them from airing their legitimate grievances.

"I condemn these senseless killings. It shows no respect for human rights. We just celebrated the International Human Rights Day two days ago," Bastes said in an interview with the INQUIRER.

The bishop said the government must look seriously into the killings as more lives are to be wasted in the murder rampage.

The Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP)-Sorsogon Chapter strongly condemned the killing of Gojol, which the chapter described as a threat to their group.

The IBP stressed that it should not be taken against the lawyers who extend services to known left-leaning organizations or individuals as they could not refuse those who need their legal service, similar to doctors who are bound by their sworn duty to extend medical help to whoever is in need of such an assistance.

Lawyer Joven Laura, IBP-Sorsogon chapter secretary, said her group is considering asking the Melo Commission to conduct an investigation in Sorsogon, noting that the numerous political killings have remained unsolved.

Laura stressed that the police seemed helpless in solving these cases which gives the public the perception that the government was not concerned about these killings at all.

Provincial police director Senior Supt. Joel Regondola, meanwhile, revealed that police might have a good lead in the investigation of the Gojol killing after a witness was able to get the license plate of the gunmen's back-up vehicle, a jeep, of Gojol's assailants.

Regondola said they were now verifying the ownership of the vehicle, which might lead investigators to the identity of the killers.

He assured the public that the PNP would not leave any stone unturned in the investigation as he urged other witnesses to come out in the open and cooperate in the investigation.

He said police would look into all possible angles in the case, including the political angle after being informed that Gojol had earlier made public his intention to run as congressman in the first district of Sorsogon.

Not one of the murders of leftist activists has been solved despite an order from President Macapagal-Arroyo for police to put a stop to the killings. *Bobby Labalan, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Smuggled China pork pilfered, says solon

BAUTISTA, PANGASINAN—REP. Amado Espino Jr. has filed a resolution calling for an investigation of the alleged pilferage of seized cargo consisting of banned imported meat products that were due for dumping.

Espino said the House of Representatives' committees on good government and agriculture would discuss next week House Resolution 1449 to find out if the smuggled meat had been distributed in the market.

"I understand that the shipments of smuggled pork were contaminated with foot and mouth disease and that these were set to be destroyed. Was there any that found its way to the market and was already eaten?" he said.

Espino said he was concerned about the smuggling of meat and vegetables as it was adversely affecting the income of farmers, including those from Pangasinan.

Hog raisers from the province said the meat came from China, where the hog industry is reportedly suffering from FMD.

"The smuggling must be stopped not only because of the FMD threat but because it can adversely affect the local hog industry, especially those engaged in backyard hog-raising," Ramon Morden, spokesperson of the Abono Group of Farmers, said.

Abono, whose members include backyard hog raisers, asked Congress to start the investigation.

Last month, police seized two vans containing boxes of pork and chicken meat in San Pedro, Laguna.

Police reports said 20 people were arrested while unloading the smuggled products from China, India and the United States in two vans.

Boxes of smuggled meat were also seized in Pampanga recently.

Morden, citing reports from backyard hog raisers, said they were already feeling the brunt of smuggling. "[Local hog raisers] could not sell their pigs at competitive prices because of smuggled pork costs very low," he said. *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

1,500 rally in Cebu Asean people's summit

MORE THAN 1,500 PEOPLE JOINED a civil society march from Fuente Osmeña Freedom Park to downtown Cebu City on Tuesday. The group included representatives from the Indigenous Peoples (IPs), farmers, fishermen, youth and members of people's organizations.

The march was the culmination of the 2nd Asean Civil Society Conference (ACSC), where civil society organizations in the Asean region tackled various proposals and views on issues such as mining and the IPs. The conference opened on Dec. 10 and pushed through even though the Asean Summit of Leaders was postponed.

One of the prominent groups who attended the ACSC is the Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM), a group of civil society organizations opposing the revitalization of the mining industry in the Philippines.

Members of the ATM, composed of 36 groups, marched alongside tribal people to denounce the government's inability to look into their plight, especially with the government's aggressive promotion of the country as a "mining haven."

"We are marching to highlight the plight of the IPs in various issues, primary of which is the encroachment of their land for large-scale mining activities," said Jaybee Garganera, national coordinator of ATM.

"We have also released an International Solidarity statement which includes the statements of our international partners to counter the Asean Minerals Action Plan (AMCAP). Our intent is to expose the claims of the Asean states that there is such a thing as 'responsible mining,' when our experiences at the communities reveal otherwise," added Jaybee.

In that statement released during one of the forums in the ACSC, it stated that "it is impossible to have faith in the AMCAP's principles when the local mining situation is neither sustainable nor progressive, but instead, rocked by scandals."

HOPE FOR ALBAY
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Tan Yan Kee trustee Carmen K. Tan (third from left), wife of taipan Lucio Tan, leads the HOPE Caravan relief mission in various evacuation sites in Albay where hundreds of families displaced by mudslides are temporarily sheltered. Mrs. Tan distributed relief goods at the Busay Elementary School in Guinobatan.

WALANG IWANAN, KAIBIGAN, TULOY ANG LABAN!

Never will you, Ronnie, my very best friend, ever be forgotten. Not by me. Not by the millions of Filipinos who elected you to become the President of the Republic, but whose voice and will were thwarted by an illegitimate regime through fraudulent means.

You have been gone from us for two long years, but you have not been forgotten, my friend, nor has the fight for freedom, democracy and justice been stilled.

Today, I, together with the masses, reiterate that vow to continue the quest for justice and democracy, to give the Filipino people a true and legitimate leader who will be destined to serve them to bring about a regime of truth, justice and democracy.

Rest well, Ronnie. The fight for justice and democracy is not over.

Laging nagmamahal
Erap

ADVT

E-mail: pr_provincial_news@inquirer.com.ph

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor **Jun Bandayrel**
Bureau Chief **Floreño G. Solmirano**

Bicol youths build network of donors

By Ephraim Aguilar
Legazpi City

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A university professor living in the same dormitory asked how they could help. Although the question was apparently meant just to appease her, it challenged Gadaingan, who transformed feelings of fear and melancholy into compassion and a desire to help.

"I had no access to television that time. I simply relied on the newspapers and accounts from friends told through mobile phone to know how badly hit Albay was. Hearing of the bad news, I was stunned and could not believe what happened," she said.

After going through the initial shock, the young student and two friends who also came from Bicol met and talked about how they could muster help for the typhoon victims in Albay.

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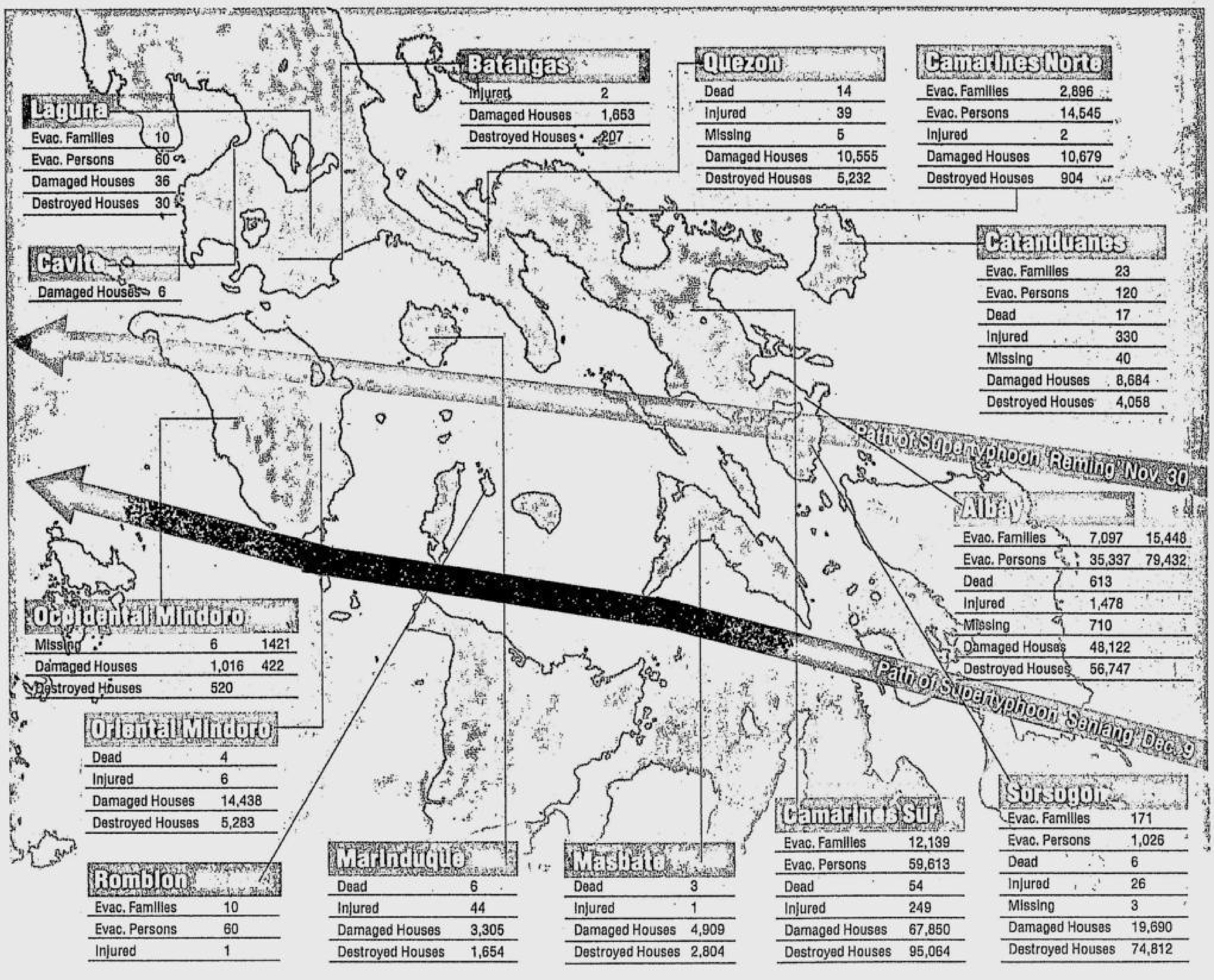
Path of Supertyphoon 'Reming' Nov. 30
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Evac. Persons	60
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Damaged Houses	6

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Injured	2
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Destroyed Houses	56,747	

Occidental Mindoro

Missing	6	1421
Damaged Houses	1,016	422
Destroyed Houses	520	

Oriental Mindoro

Dead	4
Injured	6
Damaged Houses	14,438
Destroyed Houses	5,283

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Injured	1

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Dead	6
Injured	26
Missing	3
Damaged Houses	19,690
Destroyed Houses	74,812

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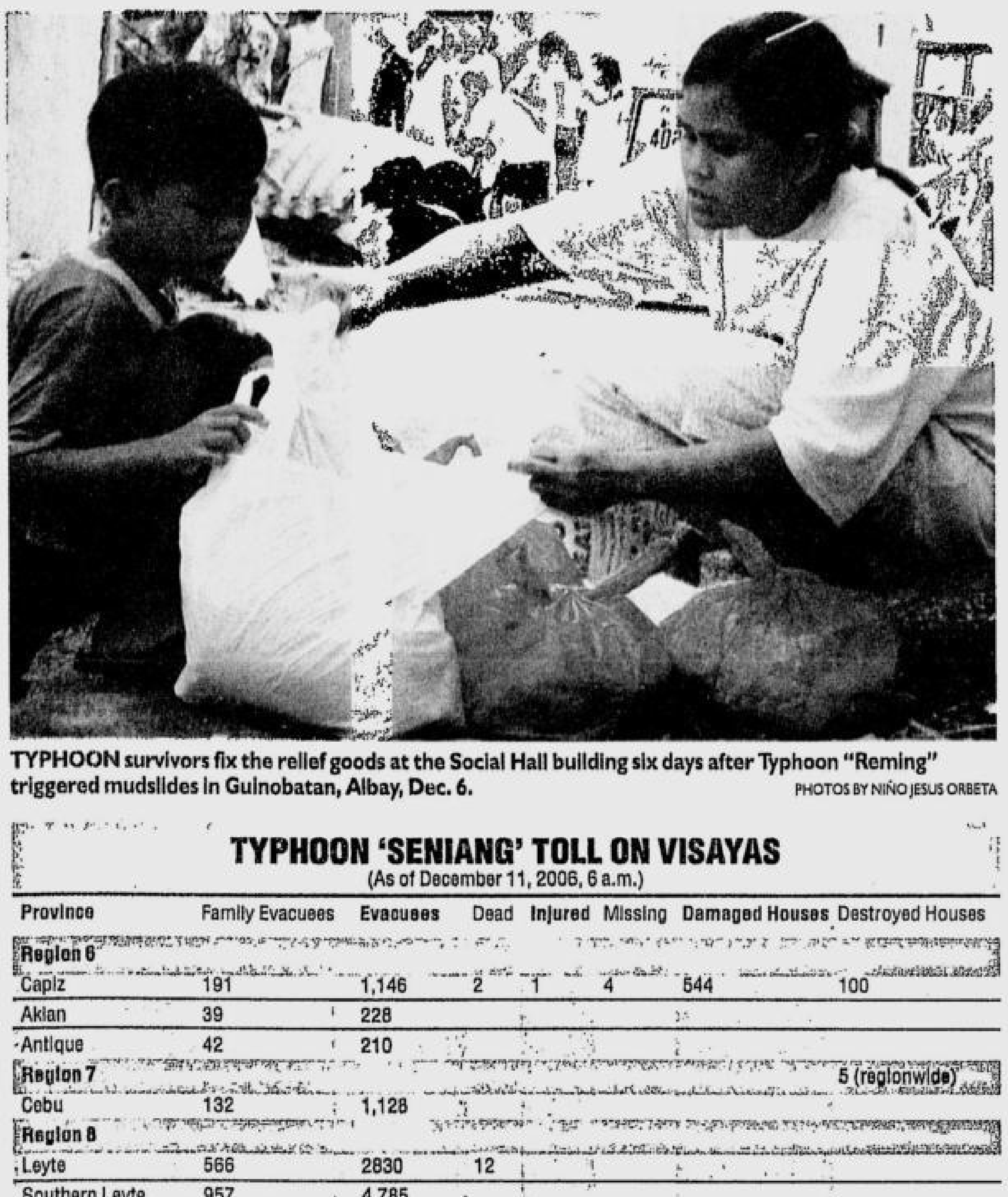
SOURCES: NDCC/OCD-5

Inqfographic: Ernie Sambo/ LA Mistodes



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PHOTOS BY NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

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SOURCE: NATIONAL DISASTER COORDINATING COUNCIL

INQGRAPHIC: ERNIE SAMBO

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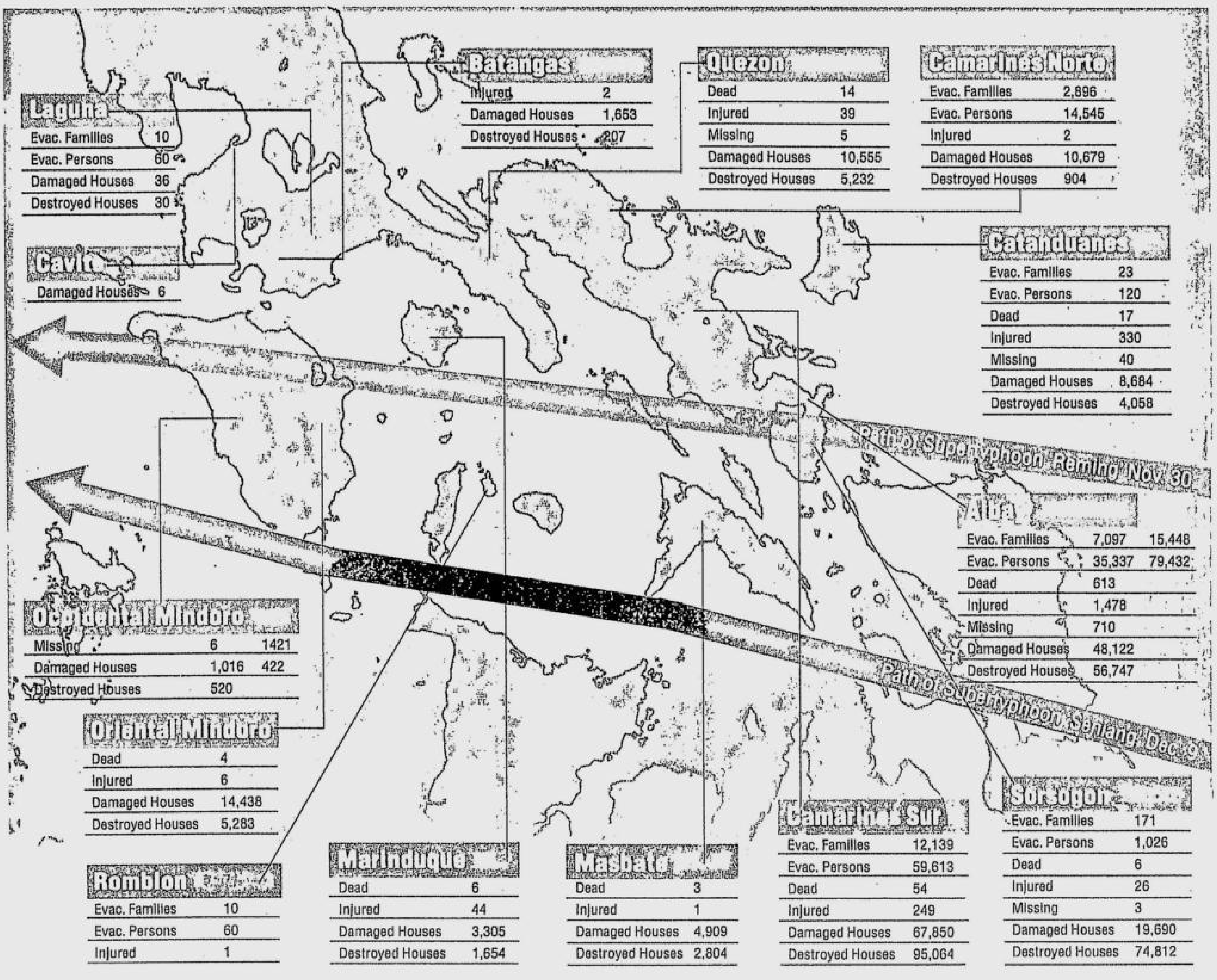
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SOURCES: NDCC/OCD-5

Infographic: Ernie Sambo/ LA Mislodes

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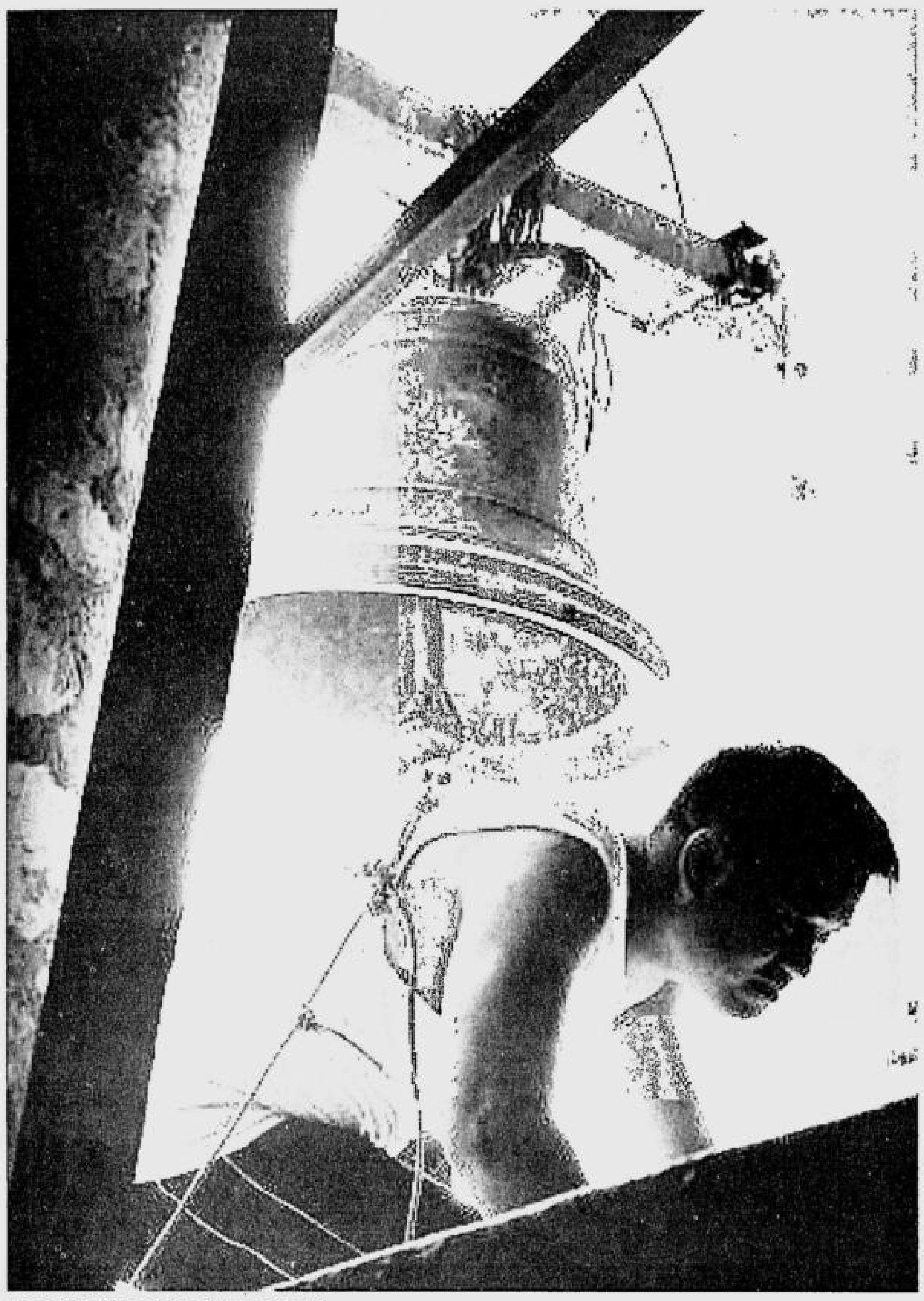

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS TONETTE OREJAS/INQUIRER CENTRAL LUZON
A worker cleans the belfry of the Pio Chapel in Porac, Pampanga.

Mayor's son ambushed, killed in Pampanga town

APALIT, PAMPANGA—THE SON OF Mayor Tirso Lacanilao was killed after a group of men ambushed him in Barangay Sulipan here on Wednesday morning, police said.

Roy Lacanilao, 34, was on his way home in his Mitsubishi Outlander at about 5:30 a.m. when armed men in a Toyota Vios fired at his vehicle, Supt. Oscar Albayalde, Central Luzon police intelligence officer, said.

Albayalde said the killers waited for several minutes for the young Lacanilao to pass before they attacked him.

Police found shells of M-16 rifle bullets at the scene.

Mayor Lacanilao said he was not aware of people who wanted his son dead.

"I'm leaving it to God to give my son justice. I'm leaving it to the police to investigate and solve my son's murder," he said.

Chief Supt. Ismael Rafanan, regional police director, said politics as a motive was a "remote possibility."

Rafanan, in a text message to the INQUIRER, said police were looking at the young Lacanilao's personal affairs to establish a possible motive.

In Bulacan, two men believed to be communist rebels shot and killed a village chair in Malolos City on Tuesday night.

Police said Reynato Estrella, 52, chair of Barangay Atlag, was buying food at a barbecue stall near his house at about 7 p.m. when two men on a motorcycle shot him in the head.

The assailants wore ski masks and were armed with .45 cal. pistols.

Supt. Manuel Lukban, city police chief, said the suspects could be members of a hit squad of the New People's Army.

Lukban said Estrella had received death threats from communist rebels operating in the coastal areas of Bulacan after he supported the military's anti-insurgency operations in his village. *Tonette Orejas, Jun Malig and Carmela Reyes, Inquirer Central Luzon*

Bishop threatens to unmask execs in 'payola' of 'jueteng' bosses

By Melvin Gascon
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA—"JUETENG" operations in the province stopped on Saturday, two days after Catholic Bishop Ramon Villena threatened to expose government officials whose names were on the list of alleged beneficiaries of *payola* money from gambling lords.

Bet collections in at least five towns stopped almost two weeks following the games' latest revival on Nov. 19, as local and police officials were rebuked by anti-gambling crusaders led by Villena.

In a statement read over the Church-run radio station dwRV, Villena warned that he would reveal the identities of officials behind code names like "Vicks Gaporav" and "Spencer" if jueteng operations were not stopped.

He said others would be divulged to the public after they had decoded the list.

INQUIRER sources from the police and jueteng employees earlier revealed that gambling lords set aside as much as P300,000 weekly for a government official as jueteng bribe, aside from the P25,000 weekly being set aside for a police official.

Villena assailed Senior Supt. Cesar Javier, acting provincial police director, for his failure to prevent the resurgence of the illegal numbers game here, and for insisting that the bet collections were for the dry run operations of the small town lottery (STL), a government-sanctioned game.

"How can STL be played here when it does not have any permit yet from the PCSO (Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office)? I know this for a fact because I called up PCSO and they said that no permit has been given yet for Nueva Vizcaya," he said.

He said the *papelitos* (sheets of paper on which jueteng bets are recorded) are "clear evidence that jueteng is back with a vengeance."

"If it is not STL, what [else] can it be but jueteng? What a lamentable fact when the police director does not know the facts on the ground. Or is he just saving his skin?" the bishop asked.

Should the ongoing illegal gambling activities continue, Villena said he might again be forced to go to Malacañang to seek Javier's relief.

Javier declined to comment. In an earlier statement, however, he said bet collections for STL were being mistaken as jueteng activities.

The bishop also criticized the statement made by Vice Gov. Jose Gambito, who, he said, "seems to admit to the inevitability of jueteng 'unless a legal alternative like STL is in place.'"

But Gambito dismissed Villena's allegations, saying the bishop misunderstood his statement quoted in a news report.

"I could not be the one who would want jueteng because legitimate corporations with whom I had talked gave as a condition that before they would begin to operate STL, jueteng must first be stopped," he said.

He said he has been openly campaigning for STL in his desire to stop illegal gambling.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has called on the government to stop the operations of STL, saying the state-run lottery was just jueteng in disguise.

Jobseekers planning overseas trips told to acquire skills first

DAVAO CITY—THE OVERSEAS WORKERS Welfare Administration (Owwa) has called on Filipinos planning to work abroad to undergo skills training at the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda) first.

Zenobia Caro, Owwa director for Southern Mindanao, said the Tesda training is now being required of those planning to work abroad.

Earlier, the government said the skills training would professionalize OFWs and protect them from abuses in the hands of their employers.

Most of those being abused by employers are OFWs deployed as domestic helpers to the Middle East.

"Most of the Filipino DHs in the Middle East suffer overwork and physical abuse from the jealous wife of their employer," Caro said.

She said in other Middle East countries, such as Kuwait, Lebanon and Jordan, domestic helpers are treated as slaves by their employers while some are forced into sex.

"Training the OFWs on preferred skills would help them graduate into professionals, eventually improving their status in the society," Caro said at the Davao City Business Forum held at the SM Mall here yesterday.

She said OFWs, who complete the training, will be given certificates. This, she said, will serve as their accreditation for their continued deployment overseas.

Meanwhile, the Pag-Ibig Fund International Operations Group (PIOG), a program of the Pag-Ibig Fund aimed at OFWs, has existed for 10 years now but it has not fully taken off due to lack of attention from the agency, an official said.

Manolito Oligario, officer-in-charge of the Pag-Ibig Davao branch, said of the estimated 20,000 OFWs from the Davao area, only 20 percent, or 2,000, have registered as members of Pag-Ibig.

Nationwide, only about 200,000 OFWs have become Pag-Ibig members, he said.

At least 8.5 million Filipinos are working abroad.

"This area (referring to PIOG) was not given action before since our OFW membership is not a priority because we still have to register them with Pag-Ibig," Oligario said during the business forum.

He said Pag-Ibig has been focusing on capturing those in the government and private sector market, which left the OFW sector unattended.

"The situation has resulted in sluggish growth in the OFW market," he said.

Judy Quiros, Inquirer Mindanao

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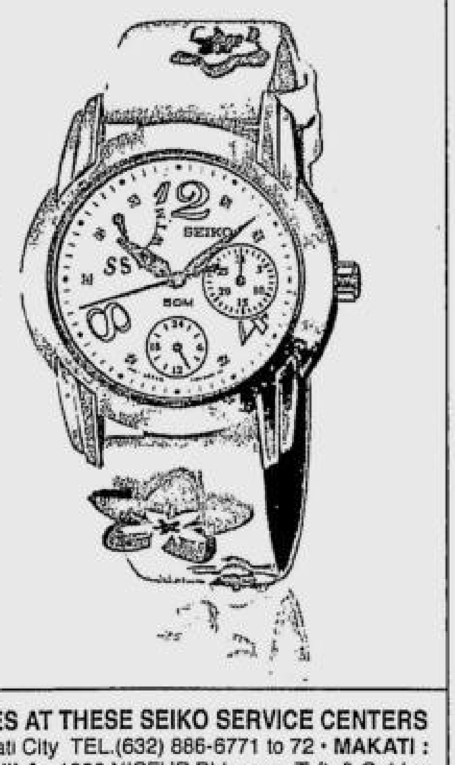

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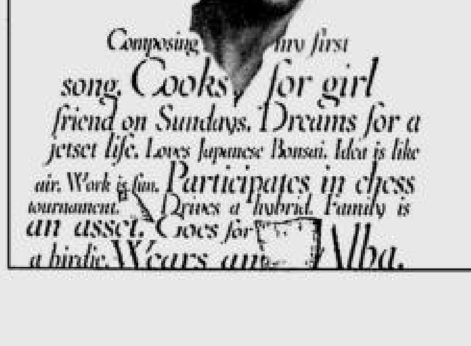
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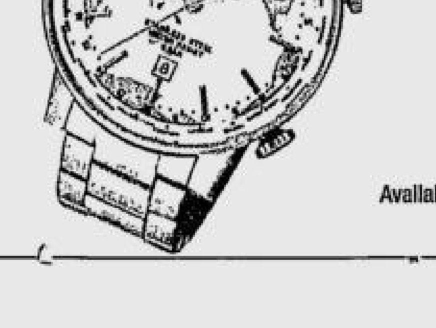

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Beermen push Dragons to the edge

By June Navarro

WELCOAT SHOULD NOW begin training its sights on the future.

The San Miguel Beermen pushed the Dragons closer to the brink of elimination with a methodical 97-85 win last night in the Talk 'N Text-PBA Philippine Cup at the Araneta Coliseum.

Danny Seigle erupted for 28 points after going eight of 12 from the field and an impeccable shooting from the free-throw line as the Beermen moved nearer to an outright semifinal seat.

Seigle, who converted all of his 11 freethrows, rode the bench in the fourth quarter and was never fielded again after the Beermen went into cruise control to notch a fourth straight victory, their 11th overall in 16 games.

With two games left, another victory could assure the Beermen of a playoff for the No. 2 spot, which, together with the top-seeded squad, will automatically advance to the best-of-seven semifinals.

Sweeping both their final assignments against the Air21 Express and the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals could carry the Beermen to one of the two semifinal slots without going through the wildcard phase and quarterfinals.

In the second game, Peter June Simon tallied a career-high 32 points as Purefoods walloped Coca-Cola, 114-73, to force a three-way tie with Sta. Lucia Realty and Red Bull at third place.

The Giants notched win No. 10 in 16 games, while the Tigers dropped to 4-13.

Rookie Jay-R Reyes tossed in 15 points and grabbed seven rebounds for the Dragons, who dropped to 4-13.

The only hope for the Dragons to advance to the wildcard phase is for Coca-Cola (4-12) to lose its last game, forcing a playoff for the final slot.

"I'm not that enthusiastic anymore," said coach Leo Austria on his team's chances. "In fact, we've already set a meeting to assess the factors that could add to the strength of the team next conference."

The scores:

SAN MIGUEL 97—Seigle 28, Adducul 12, Pena 11, Tugade 10, Hontiveros 9, Espinas 8, Ildefonso 7, Gonzales 5, Racela 4, Tenorio 2, Wilson 1, Calaguio 0

WELCOAT 85—Reyes 15, Lopez 12, Mente 12, Cabatu 11, Gelig 10, Baguion 7, Sagad 5, Sta. Maria 5, Lao 4, Felhl 4

Quarters: 17-22, 46-48, 75-68, 97-85

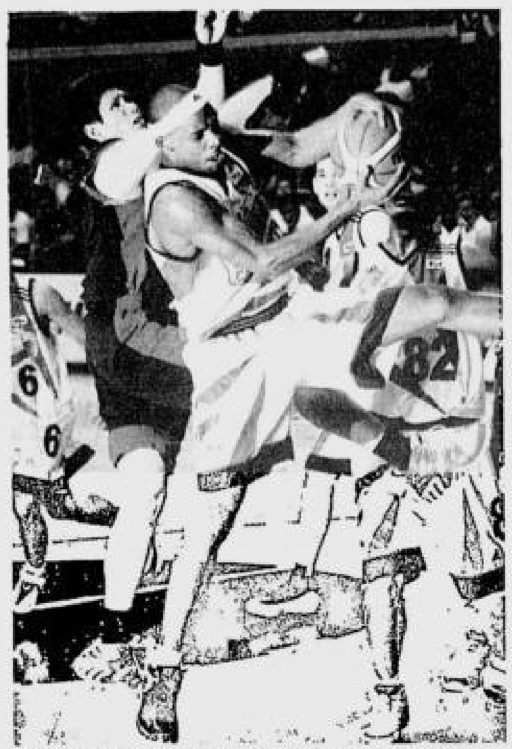
Second Game

PUREFOODS 114—Simon 32, Limpot 23, J. Yap 13, Artadi 10, Evangelista 8, Yee 8, Salvador 6, R. Yap 5, Pingris 4, Raymundo 3, Camaso 2, Castillo 0.

COCA-COLA 73—Arigo 22, Miranda 10, Yeo 8, Caceres 8, Peek 8, Antonio 8, Pacana 5, Ramos 2, Misolas 2, Salangsang 0, Ferreria 0.

Quarters: 23-20, 53-37, 83-63, 114-73.

Late Sports
More stories on A25 to 28



GABBY Espinas of San Miguel collars the rebound off Adonis Sta. Maria of Welcoat.
AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Jie gives China first tennis gold in Asiad

DOHA, QATAR—ZHENG JIE CLINCHED CHINA's first tennis gold medal in the 15th Asian Games with a 6-4, 1-6, 6-1 win Wednesday over India's Sania Mirza in the final.

Second-seeded Zheng, 23, overcame an erratic second-set to stop Mirza's winning sequence in 11 consecutive singles matches—including India's run to the final of the team event.

Zheng avenged her loss to Mirza in the final of last years Hyderabad Open, where Mirza became the first Indian to win a top WTA Tour singles title.

"I'm glad I was able to transfer the pressure to Mirza in the third set—that made a big difference," Zheng said. "I thought my performance in the Asian Games was quite good, but I was under pressure to claim the gold medal.

"I wasn't able to calm myself down in the first two sets, so played quite conservatively and tried to feed off Mirza's pace."

Zheng broke Mirza's serve in the sixth and 10th games of the opening set to overcome her own lapse of dropping service in the seventh game.

Mirza, 20, paid a heavy cost for her erratic service, which was highlighted when she double-faulted twice to drop service for the first time in the sixth game. It was another back-to-back double-fault in the deciding third set that gave Zheng the gold medal.

"I played a different game in the third set, where you could see that my stroke-making was more aggressive," said Zheng, who will partner Yan Zi in the women's doubles final.

Zheng and Yan, the top-seeded women's doubles team, meet fourth-seeded Chan Yung-jan and Chuang Chia-jung of Taiwan in the title contest Thursday.

Mirza said she felt tired from playing too much tennis during the Asian Games, having led the Indian team to a silver medal in the women's team event and also making the finals of the singles and mixed doubles.

"I've played so many matches in the past 10 days, but that's no excuse," Mirza said.

Mirza, now with two silver medals here, still has a chance of gold later Wednesday when she pairs with Indias Davis Cup captain Leander Paes for the mixed doubles final against the Japanese pair of Satoshi Iwabuchi Akiko Morigami.

The Indian pair of Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi, backed by a raucous crowd of expatriate Indians, will be seeking their second consecutive Asian Games gold medal in men's doubles. Paes and Bhupathi take on Sanchai Ratiwatana and Sonchat Ratiwatana in the final later Wednesday. *AP*

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Day 2 **December 16, 2006**
10:30 AM - **Go Negosyo Day 1 Highlights** • 11:50 AM - **Awarding of the Inspiring OFW Entrepreneurs** • 12:00 NN - **FORUM 5: Go Negosyo, Negosyanteng OFW! (The Inspiring Entrepreneurs Forum)** • 12:45 PM - **Barcelona Movie Screening** • 2:45 PM - **FORUM 6: Pagpapatakbo ng Negosyo, Habang Ako'y Nasa Ibayo (Running a Long-Distance Business)** • 3:35 PM - **Testimony of Sandy Javier of Andok's Manok** • 3:55 PM - **FORUM 7: Pagpapahalaga Sa Sarili, Pamilya At Bayan; Susi Sa Pangmatagalang Tagumpay At Makabuluhang Negosyo** • 6:00 PM - **Game Show With Celebrities** • 7:30 PM - **Market! Market! Simbang Gabi**

Day 3 **December 17, 2006**
10:30 AM - **Go Negosyo Day 1 and Day 2 Highlights** • 12:00 NN - **Game Show With Celebrities** • 1:00 PM - **Sponsors' Segment** • 3:00 PM - **The Franchise Advantage - The Philippine Franchise Association (PFA)** • 6:00 PM - **Game Show With Celebrities** • 7:30 PM - **Market! Market! Simbang Gabi**

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Dumaguete ready for national students hoops tournament

THE STATE-OF-THE-ART LAMBERTO Macias Gym, Dumaguete City 's premiere sports center, will be the main venue for the national finals of the 61st National Students Basketball Championship, also known as the National Inter-Secondary and National Inter-Collegiate Championship, which will be held from Feb. 27 to March 5 in Dumaguete City.

Aside from the Lamberto Macias Gym, which is located at the heart of the city, seven other venues will be arranged and made available for use of the estimated 600 high school and collegiate players who will fly to Dumaguete City to compete for the prestigious national titles.

The other possible venues to be tapped are in Silliman University and Foundation University, both located in Dumaguete City; Zamboangita City, Tanjay City, Bais City, Bayawan City and Sta. Catalina. These are the same venues which were utilized in 2005 for the 59 editions of the NSBC, said Negros Oriental provincial sports director Buddy Ravello.

Negros Oriental Gov. George P. Arnaiz and Basketball Association of the Philippines (BAP) secretary general Graham Lim had met recently for the said hosting and both decided to hold some games outside Dumaguete to give the participants and guests a chance to enjoy the many tourists attractions of the province.

A representative from the BAP will visit all the aforementioned venues before yearend in early preparation for the event.

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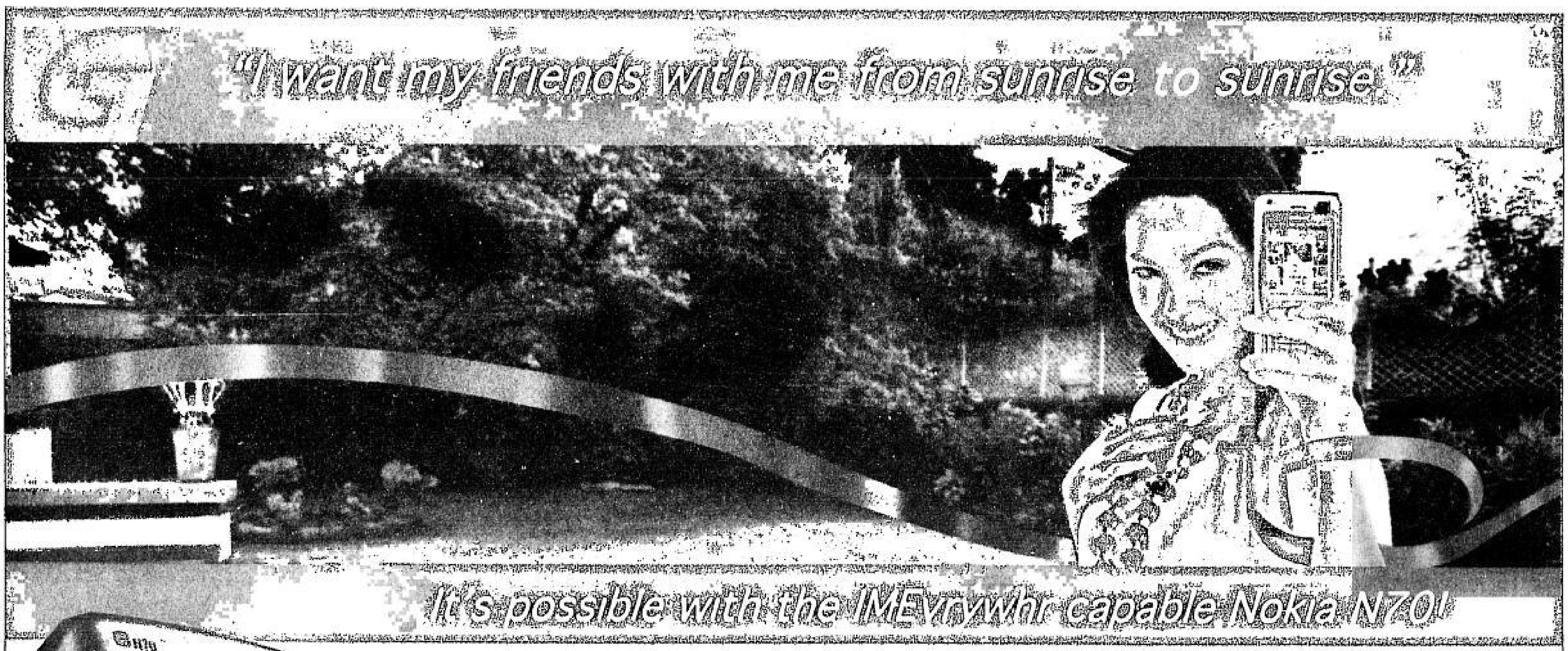
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₱1M for info on OSG man's slay

Victim handled several high profile court cases

By Armand N. Nocum

MALACAÑANG IS OFFERING A P1 million reward to anyone who can provide information leading to the capture of the killers of Assistant Solicitor General Nestor J. Ballocillo.

Solicitor General Antonio Eduardo Nachura said that the killing of Ballocillo—as well as his son Benedict—may have something to do with the expropriation of the controversial Ninoy Aquino International Airport terminal 3 (Naia 3) and the Milk Code case that the elder Ballocillo was handling.

"President Arroyo ordered the release of a P1 million reward to anyone who could provide reliable information that could shed light on the killing of Ballocillo and his son," said Nachura.

"The President gave a clear message that she will not condone such a dastardly act. The government will not be cowed into submission by criminal acts like the one committed against the Ballocillos," he added.

Ballocillo and his son were shot dead by several suspects last Dec. 6 while walking toward a public transport terminal near their house in Barangay San Antonio, Parañaque City.

Nachura, meanwhile, said the OSG would not be deterred from performing its mandate as a government lawyer and as a tribune of the people. The P1 million bounty is in addition to the P200,000 earlier offered by the Southern Police District.

"I asked the Philippine National Police and the National Bureau of Investigation to leave no stone unturned in conducting its investigation. Justice must be served, if only to honor the memory of Ballocillo," Nachura said.

In linking the Milk Code case to his death, Nachura described Ballocillo as an advocate of "breastfeeding."

"Nestor came out very strongly in these cases since he is an advocate of breastfeeding. Because of his kindness, humility and deep religiosity he even got the tag *obispo* (bishop). He was a valedictorian in law school. He was my student at the Arellano Law Foundation, " Nachura said.

Ballocillo, he added, also helped in the recovery of hundreds of millions of dollars in the Marcos ill-gotten wealth cases.

Nachura said Ballocillo also successfully litigated the case against Manila Electric Company where the Supreme Court ordered the power firm to refund overcharged fees to consumers.

Ballocillo also handled the international arbitration and expropriation cases involving the Naia terminal 3. The government has taken over the terminal after making an initial payment of P3 billion to the Philippine International Air Transport Corp. consortium which built the facility.

Fraport, a member of the consortium, has gone to the US-based International Court for Settlement of Investment Disputes to ask the court to order the government to pay $425 million in compensation.

Supt. Ronald Estilles, Parañaque police chief, on the other hand, said they were not discounting the possibility that Ballocillo's murder could be related to the murder of Pasay City Judge Henrick Gingoyon, who was handling the Naia Terminal 3 proceedings when he was killed.

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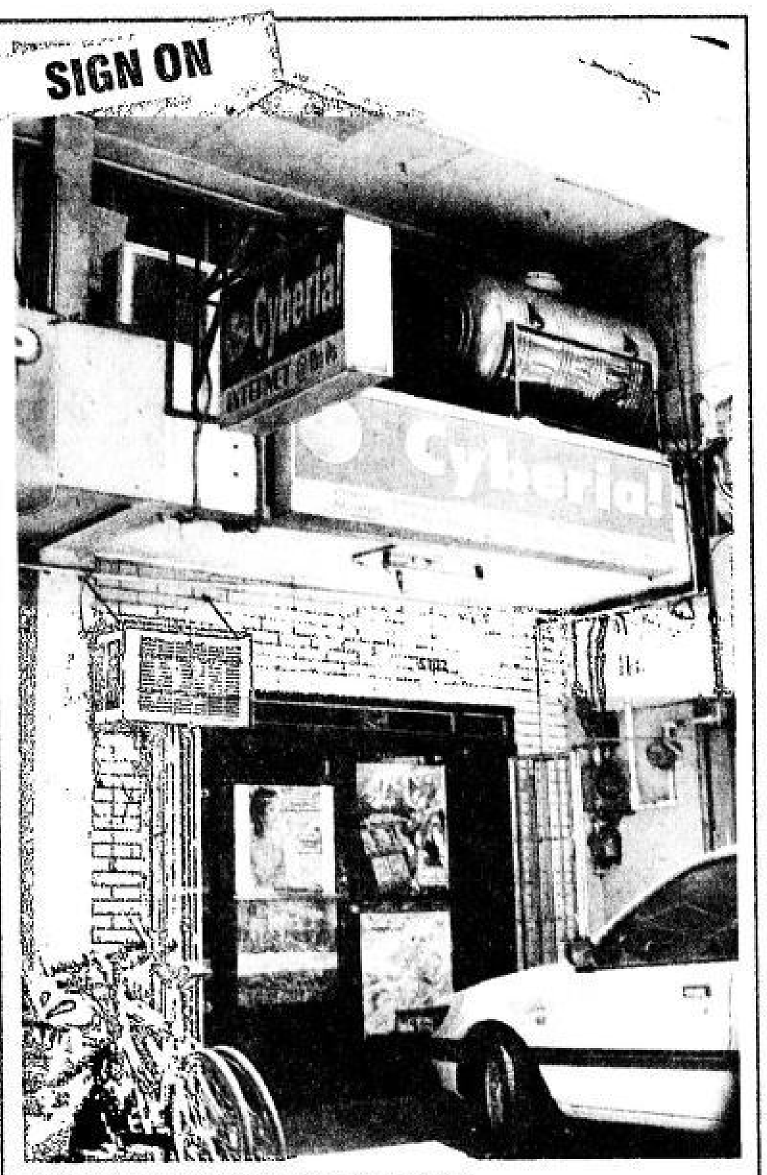

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Internet cafe located at the side of the Makati-Mandaluyong Bridge on J.P. Rizal Street. ROMY HOMILLADA

Caught in the act

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION Police Office arrested on Tuesday five policemen who allegedly sold illegal drugs in Quezon City.

Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas Jr., chief of the Regional Intelligence and Investigation Division, identified the suspects as SPO2 Rodolfo Estones, PO2 Jay Calderon, PO2 Cyril Dgusen, PO2 Darwin Salvador and PO1 Rolando Isidro.

A former policeman identified as Elmer Ramos and two civilians, Darwin Mijares and Marcelo Montero, were also arrested.

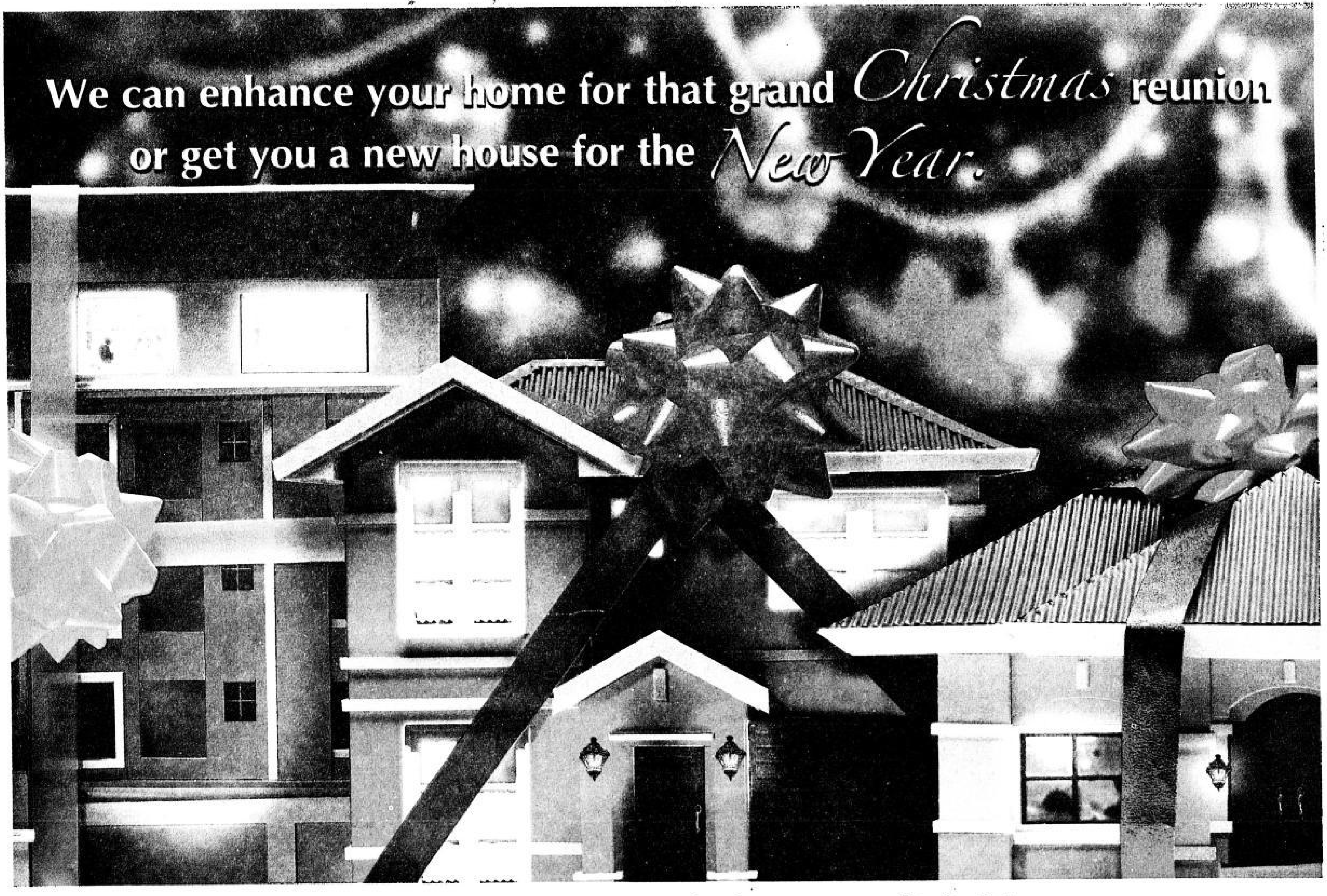
The suspects were cornered in an entrapment operation near a fast food restaurant along Commonwealth Avenue at around 1:20 p.m. the other day.

Confiscated from the suspects were two kilos of suspected methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu, six .44-cal pistols, a .99 mm Beretta pistol, seven loaded magazines and a cell phone.

Rojas said the five policemen, all detailed at the Quezon City police headquarters, had been under watch for sometime for allegedly selling illegal drugs.

"It took us awhile to catch them because they had been changing their areas of operation," Rojas told the INQUIRER yesterday.

The suspects will be charged for violating Republic Act 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002.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8 family members hurt in Parañaque City fire

By Jocelyn R. Uy

EIGHT PEOPLE, INCLUDING three children, were hurt after a liquefied petroleum gas cylinder stove leaked and exploded in Parañaque City yesterday morning.

Case investigator SFO4 Arturo Castro said the explosion occurred shortly after 8 a.m. inside the house of the Mejos family on Sta. Cecilia Street, Valley 1 in Barangay San Antonio.

Castro identified the injured as Roger Mejos, 45; his wife Rufina, 42 and their children Myla, 21; Malou, 17; Malyn, 15; Maris, 12; Roger Jr., 11 and Mark, 5. The couple's three other children were spared as they were already in school when the incident happened.

The injured all sustained third degree burns except for Maris, who suffered minor burns in the face and nape. She was brought to the Parañaque Community Hospital with sisters Malou and Malyn.

The others were taken to the Philippine General Hospital. Myla, who is pregnant, reportedly experienced bleeding episodes after the incident.

Based on initial investigation, Roger, a fishball vendor, was reportedly fixing his LPG cylinder stove when the incident occurred. Castro said one of the LPG tank's valves had been disconnected, causing the gas to leak.

Witnesses said they heard a loud hissing sound and smelled gas coming from the family's house before the explosion. They also said that Mejos was smoking when the incident occurred. But according to Castro, a lit cigarette is not capable of starting a gas explosion.

"It looks like the blast was triggered by a kerosene stove which was lit at that time. The wife was cooking when the incident happened," Castro told the INQUIRER.

In Las Piñas City, a fire caused by a gas leak hit the Aranda Compound on F.Y. Manalo Street in Barangay Talon Dos yesterday.

Case investigator SFO3 Roberto Nullan said a man identified as Danilo Estropia stabbed Wilma Cosme, 45, and her niece, Bernadette. He then tried to set his victims' house on fire by turning on the LPG stove.

Estropia, however, was shot dead by responding policemen although the fire spread to six other houses. A resident, Teresita Durado, suffered minor burns in the hands. Damage to property was pegged at P300,000 after the fire was put out shortly after 12:30 p.m.

Soriano jail guards take witness stand

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE THREE JAIL GUARDS WHO were escorting former National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) agent Martin Soriano when he was arrested in Makati City on Monday afternoon with a stolen vehicle have agreed to testify against him and his four companions.

"The jail guards have executed statements that it was Soriano who offered the use of a Mitsubishi Lancer and a Toyota RAV4 to them that day," said Regional Director Ruel Lasala , chief of the NBI National Capital Region Office.

Soriano, who has been detained at the Quezon City Jail for the past two years for kidnapping charges, was arrested after eating at a Makati Avenue restaurant following a hearing at the Makati City Metropolitan Trial Court for another kidnapping charge.

The three jail guards—SJO3 Enrique Guevarra, SJO3 Edgardo Naguimbing and SJO3 Eduardo Tayag—who were escorting him have been taken into custody by the NBI.

Offer

The guards said that Soriano had allegedly offered the vehicles when he learned that the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology had a shortage of vehicles available for the transport of detainees from the Quezon City Jail to the courts where their cases were being heard.

They did not know that the vehicles were stolen, the guards added.

Lasala said Soriano has been brought back to the Quezon City Jail while his four civilian companions—his girlfriend Maria Irlanda, his personal secretary Helen Gratil, and drivers Emiliano Capili and Michael Gatchalian—are still detained at the NBI jail. The five were charged on Tuesday with car theft.

An investigation conducted by the NBI NCR showed that complainant Johnny Catayong, a businessman and resident of San Isidro, Makati City, was driving on Gil Puyat Avenue when he saw his Mitsubishi Lancer, which he lost to car thieves two months ago, pass by.

Assistance

Catayong followed the stolen car, which was tailed by the Toyota RAV4, to a restaurant on Makati Avenue and immediately called the NBI for assistance.

Soriano, who was dismissed from the NBI in April 1999, was arrested in January 2005 for allegedly abducting Caroline Guillen in Makati City.

He was also accused by police asset Mary "Rosebud" Ong of kidnapping her and her mother.

The next targets?

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

IF THE GUYS WHO WANT PASIG City Rep. Robert "Dodot" Jaworski dead are members of a drug syndicate that owned the shabu *tiangge* (mini market) in the city that was raided by the police months ago, then my life and that of my brother Erwin are in danger.

Jaworski said he suspects the motive for the bombing of his car that nearly killed him was his constant attacks against drug lords in the city.

The shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride) market, a few meters from the Pasig City Hall, was exposed to the public following a tip Erwin and this writer gave the Philippine National Police (PNP).

Our defunct TV program, "Isumbong Mo (Tulfo Brothers)" sent an asset who carried a tiny video camera to penetrate the exclusive market.

Erwin and I showed the footage of vendors doing brisk business inside the market to Director General Arturo Lomibao, then the chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP).

Lomibao referred us to Director Marcelo Ele Jr., then chief of the PNP's antidrugs task force. The three of us—Ele, Erwin and myself—planned the raid.

If Jaworski's hunch is accurate—that the Pasig drug syndicate was behind the attempt on his life—then can I request the authorities to provide my brother and I with security escorts?

Erwin and I could be the next targets of the syndicate.

After the raid, General Ele warned us to be careful. He said the syndicate that ran the market could get back at us.

My Marine security escorts, who were provided to me by President Macapagal-Arroyo herself, were withdrawn months ago. The reason given to me was that my bodyguards were to be assigned in Mindanao.

But I suspect the reason for the withdrawal was my personal tiff with the President's husband, Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo.

The police security escorts of Erwin and another brother, Raffy, were also withdrawn at about the same time my escorts were told to report back to Marine headquarters.

Erwin and I never received any monetary reward for exposing the shabu *tiangge*. We don't intend to accept any reward even if there was any. Being journalists, we believe it is our duty to expose the ills of society.

Is it too much to ask for our bodyguards to be reinstated since we did our country a good turn?

***

I know that this simple request will not be granted, but I'm making it, nevertheless. ***Parang suntok sa buwan.***

I miss former President Ramos and even deposed President Erap. Both showed their gratitude to people who did them a good turn.

I was a harsh critic of Mr. Ramos, but whenever I wrote something good about him in this column, he would cut out the item and write a note of thanks. He did the same to other reporters and columnists.

The same thing was true in Erap's case. For all his faults, he would thank reporters and columnists who wrote something good about him.

Republic of the Philippines
PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION
PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B
PSDC Bldg., P. Burgos cor. Alegre Sts., Batangas City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Bidding of Multi-Year Contract for Lease of Office Space
ITB# PRO4B-06-017

The **PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B (PRO IV-B)** through the Corporate Operating Budget (COB) of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation 2006 intends to apply the sum of *five million eight hundred forty six thousand four hundred pesos (P5,846,400.00)* being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the multi-year contract for Lease of Office Space. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.

LOT	LEASE CONTRACT			Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)		Cost of Bid Documents
	Location	Square meters	Monthly Rental	2007 12 months	2008 12 months	
1	Regional Office (Batangas City)	1,040	150,000.00	1,800,000.00	1,980,000.00	3,800.00
2	Warehouse/Stockroom (Batangas City)	100	10,000.00	120,000.00	132,000.00	300.00
3	PMAC Office (Batangas City)	170	35,000.00	420,000.00	462,000.00	900.00
4	Rosario Service Office (Rosario, Batangas)	110	12,000.00	144,000.00	158,400.00	300.00
5	Palawan Service Office (Puerto Princesa City, Palawan)	140	15,000.00	180,000.00	198,000.00	400.00
6	Or. Mdo. Service Office (Calapan City, Or. Mdo.)	120	10,000.00	120,000.00	132,000.00	300.00
Condition: Proposed contract price must not exceed the allotted monthly rental stated above.				Contract Duration: 2 years		

The **PRO IV-B** now invites Bids from eligible bidders for Lease of Office Space as presented above. These contracts shall take effect on **February 1, 2007 to December 31, 2008.** The description of an eligible bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organization of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder of the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount presented above. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The PRO IV-B will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **December 21, 2006, 1:00 p.m.** at the 3rd floor, Conference Room, PRO IV-B.

Bids and Eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before **January 4, 2007, 9:00 a.m.** Late bids will not be accepted. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following forms and amount.

FORM OF SECURITY	Minimum Amount in % of ABC to be Bid
1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit.	One percent (1%)
2. Bank Guarantee	One and a half percent (1 1/2%)

Bid opening shall be on **January 4, 2007,** 10:00 a.m. at the 3rd Floor, conference Room, PRO IV-B. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

The PRO IV-B reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Rhonalyn Marasigan/Johnrey Iguiron (BAC Secretariats)
PhilHealth Regional Office IV-B
PSDC Bldg. #89 P. Burgos cor. Alegre Sts., Batangas City
Tel. No. (043) 723-8822 loc. 201
Facsimile No. (043) 723-8822 loc. 409
e-mail address: region4b@philhealth.gov.ph

Sgd. CIRILO C. BALMACEDA
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - December 14, 2006)

Taxman runs after movie director

By DJ Yap
and Bayani San Diego Jr.

TELEVISION AND MOVIE DIRECTOR Jerry Lopez Sineneng was charged yesterday with violating the tax code for allegedly failing to present his books of accounts and other financial records.

Sineneng—whose most recent film was the suspense thriller, "Wag Ka Lilingon"—was charged by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) with violating Sections 5 and 14 under Section 266 of the Tax Reform Act of 1997 according to a complaint filed in the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office.

The BIR, represented by lawyers Philip Mayo and Amado Rey Pagarigan, said the director failed to produce his accounting records for 2003.

In their complaint, they said that a Letter of Authority was served on Sineneng on Dec. 7, 2005 requesting him to present his company's accounting records.

The letter also authorized revenue officer Milagros Martinez to examine the director's financial records to verify his tax liabilities. Sineneng however, allegedly failed to comply with the order, despite repeated follow-ups in person or by phone, the BIR said.

The tax agency issued a subpoena duces tecum on April 26 ordering the director to appear before its legal division with the documents on June 15. The subpoena was served on June 9. But Sineneng still allegedly failed to present the documents at the appointed time and date.

Sought for comment, Sineneng told the INQUIRER that he does not know anything about the case.

He confirmed, however, that he received a subpoena from the bureau last year. "But what I know is that my accountant has already fixed the problem and we provided all the documents requested by the BIR."

The director's film credits include "All About Love" (2006), "Ngayong Nandito Ka" (2003) and "Soltera" (1999). He also directed the ABS-CBN soaps "Pangako sa Yo" (2000), "Basta't Kasama Kita" (2003) and "Labs Ko Si Babes" (2000).

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s.

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
ROYAL MAKATI MARKETING (RMM) CORP. UG-18 Cityland Condo. VIII, 98 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City	Hyungee Lee	Administrative Manager
ROYAL MAKATI MARKETING (RMM) CORP. UG-18 Cityland Condo. VIII, 98 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City	Byung Chul La	Operation Manager
VISA INTERNATIONAL (ASIA PACIFIC) LTD. 22/F Tower I, The Enterprise Center 6766 Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Robert Charles Joubert	Country Manager for Philippines
ANYFFICE PHIL. CORP. Unit 8D2 Legaspi Tower 300, Roxas Blvd. cor. Vito Cruz St., Manila	Heeyoung Kim	Managing Partner
SUZUYO & CO., LTD. Queensway Ave. cor. Sta. Agueda St., Sto. Nino, Parañaque City	Tomoyuki Numaguchi	Representative
GLOBAL RESOURCE CREATIVE EXCHANGE INC. A-312 Galeria de Magallanes, Makati City	Alexander Michael Compton	Artist
YAN-LY INT'L. TRADING CORP. 288 Escolta St., Sta. Cruz, Manila	Qinfang Guo	Assistant General Manager
LUK FOO INTERNATIONAL CUISINE, INC. Ninoy Aquino Ave., Sto. Niño, Parañaque City	Chelong Huang	Chief Cook
NEC TELECOM SOFTWARE PHILS., INC. 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City	Hiroshi Tanaka	Nihongo Instructor
AZTERIZK CONSULTANTS INC. 19 A Gumamela St., Clinicville BF Homes, Parañaque City	Eun Sook Kim (w/o Kim)	Foreign Consultant
FOSTER WHEELER (PHILIPPINES) CORPORATION 7F PDCP Bank Centre V.A. Rufino St., Legaspi Village Makati City	Rafael Fernando Faria Maltez	Structural Coordinator/ Consultant
FOSTER WHEELER (PHILIPPINES) CORPORATION 7F PDCP Bank Centre V.A. Rufino St., Legaspi Village Makati City	Robert Kai Schaumann	Cost Planning Engineer
SYKES ASIA INC. 26/F Robinsons Summit Center, 6783 Ayala Avenue, Makati City	Po Man Benjamin Ho	Mandarin Client Support

If you have any information/objection to the abovementioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI–Dec. 14, 2006)

DID YOU KNOW

SAN LAZARO Hospital (SLH), the national reference laboratory for tests on the human immunodeficiency virus, acquired immune deficiency syndrome and sexually transmitted infections, was founded in 1577 as a dispensary clinic in Intramuros, Manila. Later, it became a hospital for leprosy and mentally ill patients. SLH relocated to Sta. Cruz in 1784. Americans started running the hospital in 1898 as a contagious disease hospital before turning it over to Filipinos in 1918. Patients with mental illnesses were moved to the National Center for Mental Health in the 1930s, while leprosy patients were relocated to Tala Leprosarium in 1949.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

Jailbreak spurs call for aid

By Nancy C. Carvajal

AFTER PRISONERS BROKE OUT of a Caloocan City jail the other day, the top official of the Northern Police District yesterday said he will ask local government officials for assistance in improving detention cells inside police stations.

Seven detainees facing robbery charges held inside the police sub-station on Malolos Avenue corner G. de Jesus Street in Bagong Barrio escaped by sawing off the iron bars of their cell at dawn Tuesday.

One of them was rearrested while another was surrendered by his relatives hours after the escape.

NPD director, Chief Supt. Pedro Tango, said the incident should not be repeated. All detention cells in police stations in the city should be strengthened, he added. "We will seek the help of the local government in improving police detention cells," Tango said.

The incident was the second prison break in Caloocan City in the last three months. In September, five inmates escaped from a police detention cell during a heavy downpour.

Tango said a manhunt for the remaining escapees is ongoing.

Arab League chief seeks end to Lebanon standoff

BEIRUT—THE HEAD OF THE Arab League met Lebanese leaders on Tuesday in an effort to mediate an end to a standoff between the government and the Hezbollah-led opposition that some fear could pitch the country into violence.

Amr Moussa is meeting leaders from both sides in Beirut, where the opposition has brought hundreds of thousands onto the streets pressing for a national unity government.

In a move that could complicate Moussa's efforts, the government decided to refer to parliament a UN plan for an international tribunal to try suspects in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri.

It did not say when it would refer the plan, a decision that lies with Prime Minister Fouad Siniora.

The tribunal is one of the issues at the heart of the dispute between the government, which is backed by the United States, and the opposition, backed by Syria.

Moussa met Siniora and Parliamentary Speaker Nabih Berri, whose Shiite Amal Movement is part of the opposition and a Damascus ally. Moussa made no statements.

Upon arrival in Beirut, Moussa's comments were guarded.

"There must always be hope," he said.

He will meet Siniora again later on Tuesday.

A Sudanese Arab League envoy on Monday made little progress in bridging the gap between government and opposition in a country that has seen two civil wars in 50 years.

Parliamentary majority leaders who control the cabinet are refusing to give in to an opposition demand for veto power. They say that doing so would lead to greater Syrian and Iranian influence in the Lebanese government.

Both countries back Hezbollah, which in turn has branded the cabinet a US government in Lebanon.

Anti-government protesters are spending their 12th consecutive day camped out in central Beirut, just meters from Siniora's offices, as part of a round-the-clock demonstration to press the opposition's demands.

"We won't accept any initiative that is below the minimum requirement which is the formation of a national unity government that has the third plus one of ministerial seats for the opposition," Christian opposition leader Michel Aoun told Reuters in an interview on Tuesday.

Anti-Syrian leaders say the opposition is trying to stage a coup to derail plans for the international tribunal. They accuse Damascus of the killing. Syria denies involvement.

Serge Brammertz, who leads the UN investigation into the Hariri killing in February 2005, said the inquiry was turning up "significant links" between Hariri's death and 14 other later attacks in Lebanon.

His probe continued to make numerous demands for interviews and evidence on Syria, which was cooperating in a "generally satisfactory" manner, he said. *Reuters*

Israel's days numbered, says Iran's president

TEHRAN—IRANIAN PRESIDENT Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Tuesday told delegates at an international conference questioning the Holocaust that Israel's days were numbered.

Ahmadinejad, who has sparked international outcry by referring to the killing of six million Jews in World War II as a "myth" and calling for Israel to be "wiped off the map," launched another verbal attack on the Jewish state.

"Thanks to people's wishes and God's will the trend for the existence of the Zionist regime is downwards and this is what God has promised and what all nations want," he said.

"Just as the Soviet Union was wiped out and today does not exist, so will the Zionist regime soon be wiped out," he added.

His words received warm applause from delegates at the Holocaust conference, who included ultra-Orthodox anti-Israel Jews and European and American writers who argue the Holocaust was either fabricated or exaggerated. His remarks were condemned in Washington, where US State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack told reporters that the Iranian president's behavior was "despicable" and called his comment "absolutely outrageous." The Vatican, Germany and the European Commission added their voices Tuesday to others—such as the United States and Israel—who have condemned the Tehran meeting. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

Rigged meetings in Japan

TOKYO—Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government struggled on Wednesday to deal with an embarrassing report showing officials had planted questions about his pet project of education reform at public "town meetings." According to the official report, based on investigations into the meetings, participants were coached on how to ask questions at 15 of the meetings, including six on education reform. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki told a news conference that the incidents were regrettable. "I want to express deep apologies to the public." There were 174 "town meetings" held on various subjects since 2001, when they were launched by Abe's predecessor, Junichiro Koizumi, as part of a campaign to explain policies and bring politics closer to the people. *Reuters*

Malaysia swears in new king

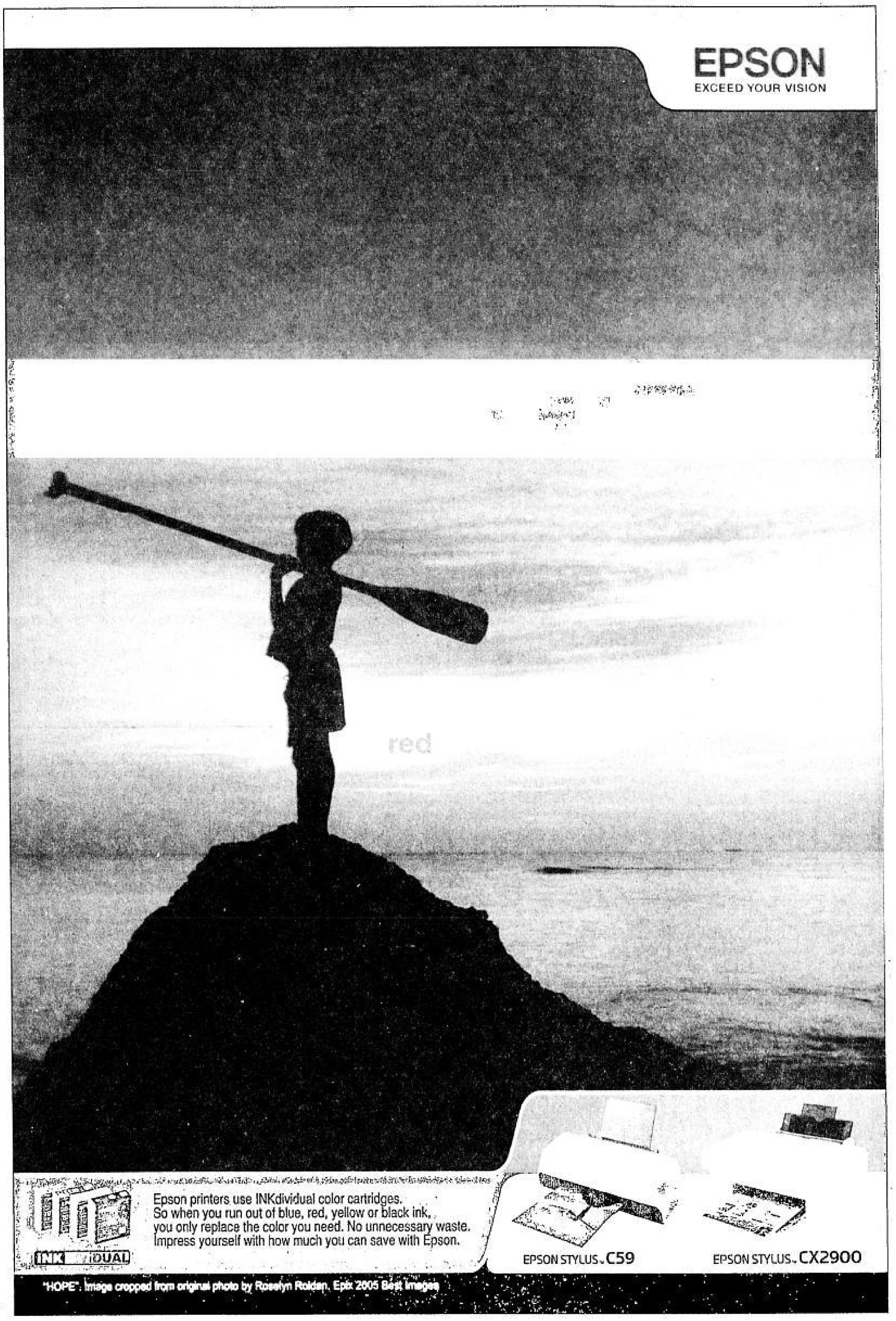
KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia swore in a new king, its second-youngest ever, on Wednesday amid controversy over the amount of money spent on the country's little-known royals. Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin, 44, wore canary-yellow robes and jewel-encrusted Malay head-dress for the glittering ceremony at the national palace. Malaysia has nine sultans and each takes turn to rule for five years as king, signing legislation into law and appointing judges but always on the premier's advice. A symbolic role, the king embodies Malaysia's heritage as a collection of Muslim kingdoms and also serves as titular head of the armed forces and keeper of the official religion, Islam. Mizan will be Malaysia's 13th king, or Yang di-Pertuan Agong, since the country gained independence from Britain in 1957. *Reuters*

Bush to sign India nuke deal

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush will sign into law on Monday a civil nuclear cooperation deal that allows the United States to sell nuclear technology to India, the White House said. Congress gave final approval on Saturday to the legislation which the Bush administration and its allies say will expand ties with the world's largest democracy and open up billions of dollars in trade for US companies. Critics say the legislation, which helps clear the way for India to buy US nuclear reactors and fuel, will undermine efforts to curb the spread of nuclear weapons. But congressional sponsors said the legislation included some restraints, such as requiring the president to stop US exports of nuclear materials if India tested another nuclear device as it did in 1998. *Reuters*

Court orders ex-Enron CEO to jail

HOUSTON—A US appeals court on Tuesday ordered ex-Enron Chief Executive Jeffrey Skilling to begin serving immediately a 24-year prison sentence after a one-day reprieve, according to court documents. Late on Tuesday, the Fifth US Circuit Court of Appeals denied Skilling's request to remain free on bail while he appeals fraud and conspiracy convictions. "As a result of the Fifth Circuit's ruling, the government is pleased that the jury's verdict and the District Court's sentence will now be carried out for defendant Skilling," US Justice Department spokesperson Bryan Sierra said in a statement. Skilling's attorney was not immediately available for comment. *Reuters*



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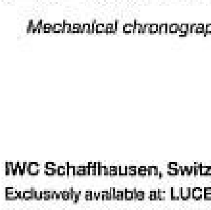
Impress yourself with how much you can save with Epson.

"HOPE". Image cropped from original photo by Roselyn Roldan, Epix 2005 Best Images

When in the cockpit, please keep an eye on the other instruments, too.



Spitfire Chrono-Automatic. Ref. 3717: The name of this watch harks back to a real legend of the skies. The coated sapphire glass is secured against sudden drops in pressure, a soft-iron inner case protects the mechanical movement against even strong magnetic fields. This watch is the result of 70 years' experience of designing pilot's watches. No wonder that even experienced pilots can hardly tear their eyes away. **IWC. Engineered for men.**

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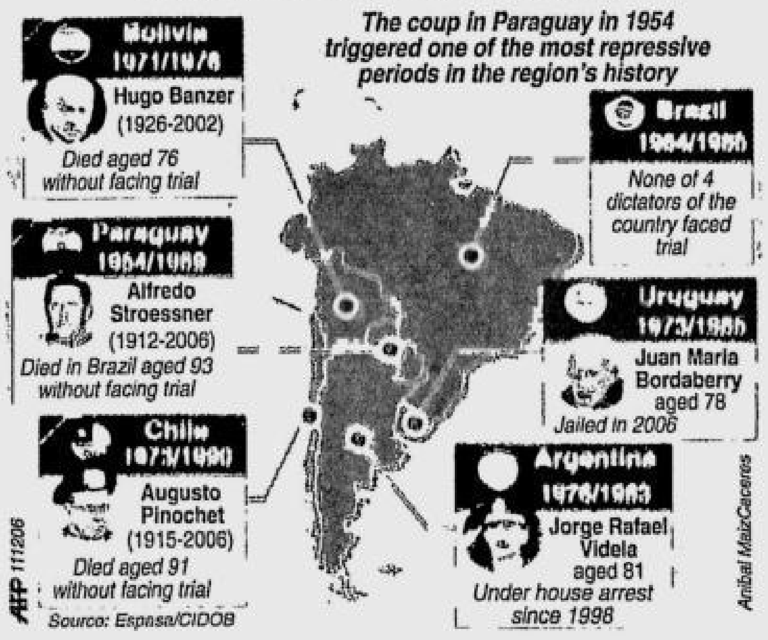
Dictators in Latin America


The coup in Paraguay in 1954 triggered one of the most repressive periods in the region's history
Bolivia 1971/1978
Hugo Banzer (1926-2002)
Died aged 76 without facing trial
Paraguay 1954/1989
Alfredo Stroessner (1912-2006)
Died in Brazil aged 93 without facing trial
Chile 1973/1990
Augusto Pinochet (1915-2006)
Died aged 91 without facing trial
Brazil 1964/1985
None of 4 dictators of the country faced trial
Uruguay 1973/1985
Juan Maria Bordaberry aged 78
Jailed in 2006
Argentina 1976/1983
Jorge Rafael Videla aged 81
Under house arrest since 1998
AFP 111206
Anibal MaizCaceres

Source: Espasa/CIDOB

Pinochet still divides Chile even at his funeral

SANTIAGO—SOME 5,000 FERvent supporters of Augusto Pinochet mourned on Tuesday at the funeral of the former Chilean dictator whose repressive 17-year rule made him infamous worldwide for human rights abuses.

Relatives, friends and top Chilean military officers crowded into a courtyard at a military college in Santiago.

Some heckled the defense minister for the government's refusal to grant him the full state funeral usually reserved for former leaders.

At the same time, a few thousand leftists rallied in the city center against Pinochet. Several demonstrators, dressed as ghouls, tossed a mock coffin into the Mapocho river, where the bodies of dissidents were thrown during the 1973-1990 dictatorship.

Pinochet, who died on Sunday at age 91, continues to polarize Chilean public opinion, even in death. His supporters credit him with saving the country from communism and chaos, while detractors call him a shameless murderer.

Center-left President Michelle Bachelet, who was tortured during Pinochet's rule, did not attend the funeral, and when Defense Minister Vivianne Blanlot arrived, mourners whistled their disapproval.

Pinochet's eldest daughter, Lucia Pinochet, praised her father for lighting "a flame of freedom" in September 1973, when he overthrew in a US-backed coup the democratically elected government of President Salvador Allende, a socialist who was backed by the Soviet Union and Fidel Castro's Cuba.

The military said up to 60,000 people attended a public viewing of Pinochet's casket before the funeral.

One of Pinochet's grandsons, an army captain, gave a speech during the funeral, praising the former dictator for having defeated the "Marxist model" by force.

Blanlot told reporters afterwards that such politically charged talk from an acting military officer was unacceptable.

"I condemn this attitude and hope the Army will take the appropriate measures," she said.

Bachelet has said it would be an affront to many Chileans to conduct a state funeral for a man who seized power by force, led a repressive regime and was under investigation for murder, torture and fraud when he died.

Pinochet's forces killed around 3,000 government opponents and suspected dissidents during his rule. Scores of military police officers also died in the political violence.

Some 28,000 people were tortured by Pinochet's secret police and hundreds of thousands of Chileans fled into exile.

Pinochet's supporters say his rule saved the country from possible civil war, and point to his free-market reforms as having paved the way for Chile's current stability.

At the funeral, many mourners applauded as Pinochet's coffin, topped with a Chilean flag, was carried into the courtyard by eight pallbearers in blue military uniform.

Reuters

Bush to unveil new Iraq strategy in early 2007

WASHINGTON—US PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush will unveil a new Iraq strategy in early 2007, the White House said Tuesday, as new polls showed most Americans do not think he can turn the unpopular war around.

"It only makes sense for the president to take whatever time he needs to have confidence in the course he'll put foward to the American people," said US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

White House officials had hoped that Bush would wrap up high-profile consultations with US diplomats and military officials as well as senior Iraqi government figures in time to showcase his new approach by Christmas.

"That is not going to happen until the new year. We do not know when, so I can't give a date," spokesperson Tony Snow told reporters. "He decided that, frankly, it's not ready yet." "He's got some very clear, practical, tactical and other questions," said Snow. "Obviously this is something that he places a premium on getting done quickly, but also getting done well." Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid criticized the move, saying: "Talking to the same people he should have talked to four years ago does not relieve the President of the need to demonstrate leadership and change his policy now." Bush held a closed-door video conference with US military commanders and the US ambassador in Baghdad, followed by talks at the White House with Iraq's senior elected Sunni Muslim leader, Vice President Tareq al-Hashimi.

"My message to you today, and to the Iraqi people is, we want to help you," Bush, who recently met with Iraq's Shiite Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and powerful Shiite cleric Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, told his guest.

"Our objective is to help the Iraqi government deal with the extremists and killers, and support the vast majority of Iraqis who are reasonable people who want peace," said the US president.

BUSH REUTERS

"There is a chance, and I can assure you there is a great and real chance to get out of this present dilemma. It is a hard time that the Iraqis face in time being, but there is a light in the corridor," said Hashimi.

But recent polls showed that the US public's pessimism about the war was at its worst, one week after a blue-ribbon commission indicted Bush's war-fighting strategy as a failure and called in its report for a new approach.

Bush has not embraced the major recommendations of the Iraq Study Group—notably its call for engaging Syria and Iran or pulling out most US combat troops by early 2008—but a brace of new polls showed ample support for the commission's advice and deep skepticism towards the White House's approach.

A survey published Tuesday by USA Today found that 55 percent of Americans want most US troops withdrawn within a year—but only 18 percent believe that will happen. The error margin was plus or minus three percentage points.

Fewer than one in five Americans have "a great deal" of trust in Bush to "recommend the right thing" for the United States to do in Iraq. Just 14 percent feel the same way about Democratic leaders who will control the US Congress come January.

A CBS News poll out late Monday found that the US public has never been more pessimistic about the war in Iraq and says a change in strategy is needed nearly four years after the March 2003 US-led invasion to oust Saddam Hussein.

According to the Gallup organization, which conducted the poll for the US television network, not even during the Vietnam conflict did so many Americans oppose the war.

AFP

Interpol joins Litvinenko poisoning inquiry

MOSCOW—INTERNATIONAL police agency Interpol is helping coordinate the investigation into the poisoning death of former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko, with a trail now running through Germany, Russia and Britain.

The head of Interpol's Russian office said on Tuesday the 186-country organization had been asked to improve the flow of information between the three countries, which have launched their own probes into Litvinenko's death.

Litvinenko died in a London hospital on Nov. 23 after exposure to radioactive polonium 210. In a statement associates released after his death, he accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of ordering his killing. The Kremlin denies involvement.

"Interpol will be called on, and is already being called on, for the speedy exchange of information between various countries," Itar-Tass news agency quoted Interpol's Russian office chief Timur Lakhonin as saying.

A spokesperson for the French-based Interpol noted the case was international and "Interpol can therefore offer and provide international assistance between the countries." The three investigations have sent British investigators to Russia to question people who met Litvinenko, and Russian newspapers have reported that Russian prosecutors might be preparing to fly to London to conduct interviews.

A German prosecutor has said Russian businessman Dmitry Kovtun, who met Litvinenko on the day he fell ill and who is now in hospital in Moscow, could be a possible suspect in the case.

Kovtun denies any part in Litvinenko's poisoning.

Kovtun told a German broadcaster he must have picked up traces of polonium from Litvinenko when he met him in London in mid-October.

"The only explanation for the traces of polonium I can give is that I brought them with me from London when I met Alexander Litvinenko there on Oct. 16, 17 and 18," Kovtun told Spiegel TV.

The interview, which Spiegel said took place on Tuesday evening, caused yet more confusion as Litvinenko was only taken ill on Nov. 1.

Gerald Kirchner of the German Radiation Protection Agency said four people feared to have been contaminated with polonium 210 through contact with Kovtun were unlikely to suffer health problems.

They were Kovtun's ex-wife, her current partner and their two children.

Kovtun, who says Litvinenko was the middleman in a business deal he was involved in, has been in a Moscow hospital with symptoms of radiation poisoning but he told Russia's First Channel he was feeling better and would be leaving soon.

"Doctors say the situation is stable now and I'm getting better," he told the television station by telephone. "I think I will stay in hospital another week or 10 days." Andrei Sidelnikov, an opposition activist, told Reuters in Moscow that Litvinenko seemed fine when they met in London two days before he was taken ill.

"We talked about everything, about politics in Russia, there was a discussion about the case of the murder of (journalist) Anna Politkovskya ... He was expecting some documents about this," Sidelnikov said.

He did not know what kind of documents but said they "could confirm the involvement of certain people in this killing."

Reuters

Court convicts Ethiopian ex-dictator Mengistu, 11 others of genocide

ADDIS ABABA—AN ETHIOPIAN court on Tuesday found former dictator Mengistu Haile Miriam guilty in his absence of genocide for atrocities committed under his Marxist regime, after a 12-year trial.

Mengistu and 11 co-defendants who had served on the government's central committee were convicted of 211 counts of genocide, homicide, illegal imprisonment and illegal property seizure by Ethiopia's Federal High Court.

"Accused numbers one to 12 are found guilty of all charges," Justice Medhin Kiros told a packed courtroom in Addis Ababa, reading from a unanimous verdict by the three-judge panel hearing the case.

Mengistu, who was ousted in 1991 and took exile in Zimbabwe, was known as "defendant number one" in the case against himself and other senior members, including ex-prime minister Fikre Selassie, in his Derg (Committee) regime.

MENGISTU AP

"The court believes that there is no justification for the Derg actions," Medhin said.

Another 60 codefendants were also found guilty of genocide, but only by a majority 2-1 ruling by the judges, who acquitted some but not all on several of the lesser charges.

Only one defendant was acquitted on all charges.

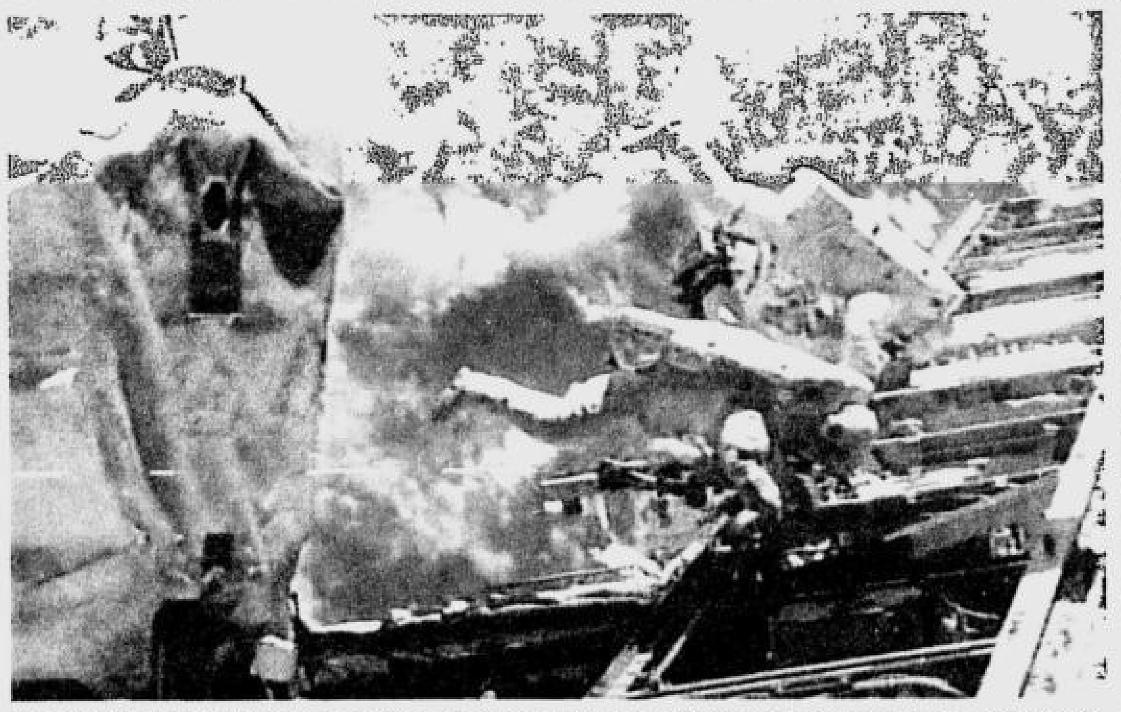
Those convicted, including Mengistu, face the death penalty and their lawyers have until Dec. 28 to file motions seeking lesser sentences, the judge said.

All appeals have been exhausted, defense lawyers in Addis Ababa said.

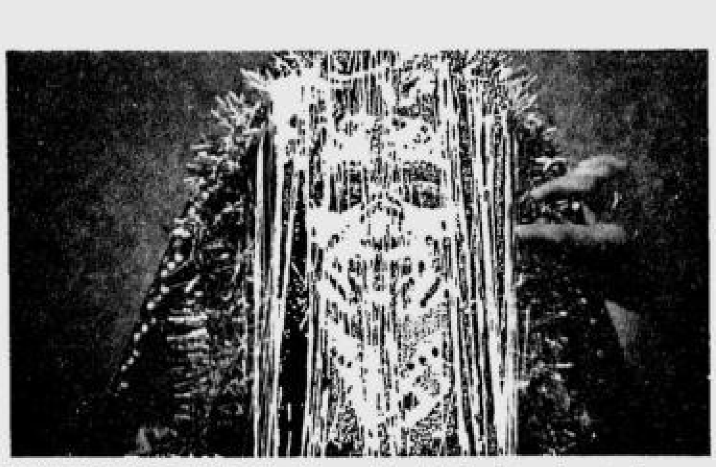
In Zimbabwe, a member of President Robert Mugabe's government ruled out extraditing Mengistu to face justice.

"Comrade Mengistu asked for asylum and he was granted that asylum," Zimbabwe's acting information minister Paul Mangwana said.

AFP



SPACEWALKERS. Astronauts Christer Fuglesang of Sweden (left) and Robert Curbeam, make their way down a truss section of the International Space Station during their spacewalk Dec. 12. The Space Shuttle Discovery crew members were adding a new piece to the metal backbone of the ISS clearing the way for a critical power rewiring later this week. REUTERS



WINTER WEDDING. A bridesmaid adds final touches to the make-up of a Bulgarian Pomak bride in the Rhodope Mountains village of Ribnovo. The people of this mountain village are famous for performing their unique wedding ceremonies in winter time only. AFP

Holocaust conference sparks Western outrage

LONDON—THE UNITED STATES and Britain led a chorus of Western disgust on Tuesday at an Iranian conference on the Holocaust, which the White House labeled as an "affront to the entire civilized world."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair condemned as "shocking beyond belief" the meeting of revisionist historians in Tehran seeking to cast doubt on the Nazi slaughter of six million Jews during World War II.

The event, Blair argued, was a "symbol of sectarianism and hatred" and an indictment of the policies being pursued by its organizer, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"What further evidence do you need to have that this regime is extreme?" Blair asked reporters.

In Washington, White House spokesperson Dana Perino offered an equally unequivocal denunciation of the conference—attended by various high-profile Holocaust-deniers like French professor Robert Faurisson, German-born Australian Fredrick Toeben and former Klu Klux Klan member David Duke.

"The gathering ... in Tehran is an affront to the entire civilized world, as well as to the traditional Iranian values of tolerance and mutual respect," Perino said.

Iran has defended its decision to hold the conference, which entered its second and final day on Tuesday, styling it as a scientific forum to examine questions posed by Ahmadinejad, who has repeatedly cast doubt on the truth of the Holocaust.

Israel spearheaded the international outcry over the meeting and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, on an official visit to Germany, said it only served to underline the security threat posed by Iran.

"The statements of the Iranian leadership at the conference underline once again the unacceptable character of the Iranian policy and underline the danger to Western civilization as a whole from such a state," Olmert said.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Israeli prime minister had laid a wreath at a Berlin train station from which 50,000 Jews were herded onto trains heading for the Nazi death camps.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, addressing a joint press conference with Olmert, rejected "in the strongest terms" the denials of the Holocaust made at the Tehran event.

AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE

Salonga top performer in Asiad closing rites/A26

E-mail: pr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

SPORTS

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres

Text us your feedback: inquirer sprt name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

An up-and-down year ends with Woods still on top/A28

RP nears Busan Asiad medal haul

By Ted S. Melendres
Sports Editor

DOHA, QATAR—A VICTORY in boxing and a runner-up finish by a karateka at the 15th Asian Games here kept the Philippines on course to surpassing its medal harvest in the previous Asiad in Busan, South Korea.

Bantamweight Joan Tipon used his familiarity with a boxer he had bested before to land the gold in one of six finals closing the boxing competitions Wednesday night while Ma. Marna Pabillore settled for the silver in the women's -53 kilogram kumite to Japan's reigning world champion.

Another karateka, Noel Espinosa, captured the bronze in the men's individual kata, also on Tuesday, as the RP contingent pushed its medal tally to 3-5-9 (gold-silver-bronze) with only a day to go in the 45-nation Games.

MA. MARNA Pabillore delivers a kick to Japan's Tomoko Araga (right) in their women's kumite 48 kg final. LYN RILLON

"We're on target to surpassing our performance in Busan (3-7-16)," said Butch Ramirez, the *chef de mission* of Team Philippines and chair of the Philippine Sports Commission. "Five golds may be impossible now, but we can't say it's over because the wushu bets are still fighting."

Tipon was in total control against a taller Han Soon-chul, taking all four rounds convincingly, and posted a widely applauded 21-10 victory at the Aspire Hall 5 here.

Pabillore whipped all the first three foes she faced on the way to the finals but fell short against Tomoko Araga, 1-9, Tuesday night. Her victory though improved on the bronze nailed by teammate Espinosa earlier.

The 26-year-old Espinosa bowed in the semifinals to eventual champion Tetsuya Furukawa of Japan, 0-5, but not before besting Inthanousone Vilasouk of Laos, 5-0, in the round of eight, Hong Kong's Lee Chi-kit, 4-1, in the quarterfinals and Diaaldeen Al Karaky of Palestine, 5-0, in the final repechage.

"I'm very happy to win the bronze, but not satisfied about the result in the semifinals," Espinosa said. "I want to improve my techniques and go to the next Asian Games."

Two other Filipinos—Mae Soriano and Irineo Toribio—lost in the quarterfinals and failed to land in the medal rounds. Soriano whipped Timor Leste's Anna Maria Paula Pinto, 9-1, but dropped a close 2-1 decision to Vietnam's Vu Thi Nguyet An, 1-2, while Toribio beat Laotian Vilasouk before getting pipped by Uzbekistan's Ihtiyor Sharapov, 0-1.

Nelson Pacalso beat Yemen's Mohammed Abobaker, 8-0, in the round of 16 but was bested by Lim Yoke Wai of Malaysia in the quarterfinal of the men's kumite -65 kg.

A team made up of Mark Javier, Marvin Cordero, Christian Cubilla and Paul Marton dela Cruz got as far as the quarterfinals before bowing to the South Koreans, 215-225. The Filipinos earlier beat the host Qataris, 214-192.

But the women, bothered by strong winds at the range in the morning, failed to progress from the round of eight, losing to the Kazakhs, 197-185.

In wushu, Willy Wang lay in fourth after two events in the men's

RP/ A26

15TH ASIAN GAMES
DOHA 2006

RP SCHEDULE Dec. 14

Chess (Al-Dana Indoor Hall)—3 p.m.—Mixed Team Classical Round 9 (Ronald Dableo, Darwin Laylo, Jodera Docena)

Diving (Hamad Aquatic Center)—10 a.m.—Men's 10m Platform Preliminary (Jaime Asok, Rexel Ryan Fabriga)

Fencing (Al-Arabi Indoor Hall)—1:05 p.m.—Men's Team Epee Round of 16 (RP vs. Bahrain)

Wushu (Aspire Hall 3)—10 a.m.—Men's Naquan-Three events combined, nangun—Southern Style—(Willy Wang, Pedro Quina)

If Rene Catalan wins in semifinals; 2:30 p.m.—Men's -52 kg final (Rene Catalan vs —)

If Eduard Folayang wins in semifinals—2:30 p.m.—Men's-70 kg final (Eduard Folayang vs —)

Cycling (Aspire Velodrome)—12 noon—Men's Madison Finals (Alvin Benosa, Arnold Marcelo); 12:30 p.m.—Men's Keirin First Round (John Paul Morales)

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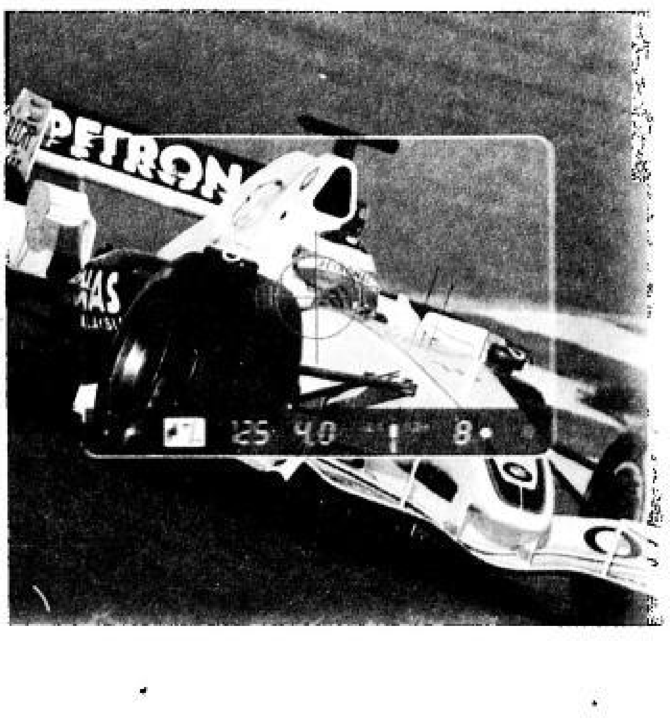

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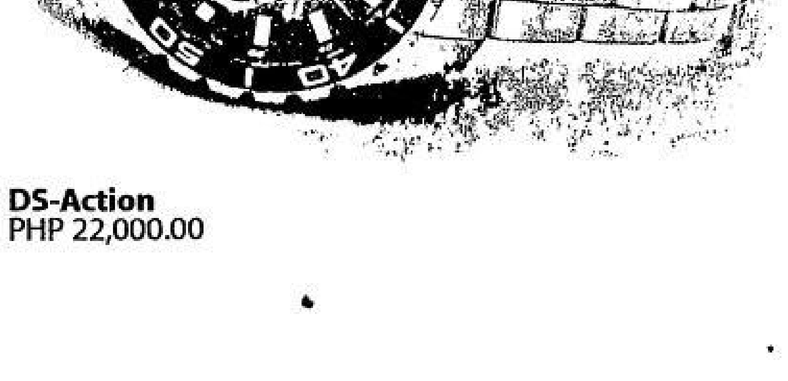


Preparation, prayers key to Payla win

THAILAND'S Somjit Jongjohor's head snaps backwards after being hit by Violito Payla in their final bout. LYN RILLON

By Ted S. Melendres

DOHA, QATAR—HE SHADOW-BOXED AND prayed, shadow-boxed and prayed.

All through the night, on the eve of the fight, Violito Payla had the swaggering Somjit Jongjohor in mind, taunting the Thai to make the first move, like he was actually there in front of him.

Payla knew he already had the number of the man who had boastfully said the Filipino would be a "piece of banana" if they meet in the finals.

But he wanted to make sure his game plan would click perfectly at fight time, so Payla prayed in the shadows of the room he shared with the other boxers in the Athletes Village. And he prayed like he never did before.

The fight came and the Filipino finally showed up the man who had beaten him in all their three previous meetings.

"*Pinag-aralan kong mabuti ang mga galaw niya, at kung paano ako makakapasok* (I studied his moves and thought of ways to hit him)," said Payla, the morning after he outfought and outpointed the tall, cocky Thai, 31-15, to nail the flyweight gold medal at the 15th Asian Games.

"*Kung hindi rin ako nagdadasal, hindi ako makakaka*-focus *na manalo* (If I had not prayed a lot, I would not have gained the focus to win)."

Payla said that his strategy was not to take on the Thai, who enjoyed a two-inch reach advantage, but wait for him to attack and then pick off points on the counter-attack.

Manny Lopez, the president of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines, said they devised the plan to beat the 32-year-old Somjit as soon as the Thai followed Payla to the finals with a decisive win (RSC-Os in third round) over Japan's Katsuaki Susa.

Head coach Patricio Gaspi talked to Payla and together they recalled all the fights with Sonjit and how he managed to frustrate him at long range.

"Because the Thai was taller and had longer reach, tinutukuran lang ang bata natin (he would score points against our man from a safe distance)," Gaspi said.

After Payla prevented Somjit from breaking away in the first round, 3-4, the RP corner knew its strategy would surprise the Thai in the second.

Payla, who fights with his left fist drifting menacingly about two feet away from his torso, scored three straight points on counter-punches to move ahead, 7-5. He never looked back and won the last three rounds by scores of 10-6, 7-3 and 11-2.

"*Sabi ni Boss* Manny (Lopez), *paghahandaan ko na raw ang* (Lopez said I should now be preparing for the) Beijing Olympics," Payla, the 27-year-old from Cagayan de Oro, said. "*Pangarap ko talaga na manalo sa* Olympics (It's my cherished dream to win in the Olympics).

Payla dedicated his victory to his wife and two kids in Sta. Barbara, Pangasinan—who he only saw on weekends while training with the rest of the team in Baguio City—and to the Filipino people "who stayed up late to watch our fights."

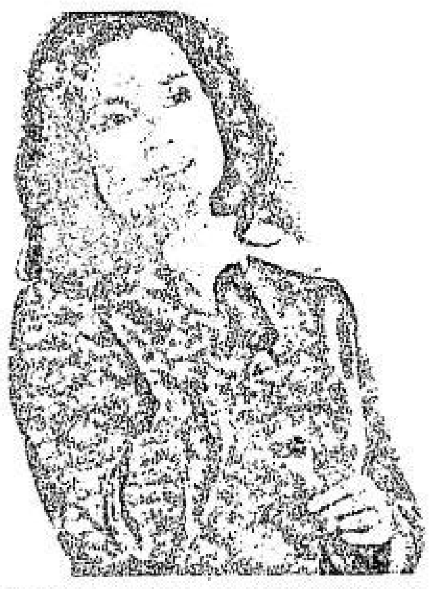
His Asiad gold medal was the country's first since the 1994 Hiroshima Games, where Elias Recaido, Mansueto Velasco and Reynaldo Galido scored a triple.

Lopez said Payla's victory vindicated Abap's much-maligned training and program.

"We did our homework and we did it quite well with the performance of our boxers here," said the 44-year-old son of former Manila mayor Mel Lopez. "The criticisms against us are mere distractions. Now, we move on to the heavier battles like the Olympics."

Salonga top performer in Asiad closing rites

By Ted S. Melendres



LEA SALONGA: Best Asian for the role

DOHA, QATAR—LEA SALONGA WILL be the main performer at the Closing Ceremonies of the 15th Asian Games tomorrow, according to the creative mind behind the quadrennial event's opening extravaganza.

"She's fantastic, she's quite a performer," Briton David Atkins said of Salonga in an interview with the INQUIRER yesterday. "The musical directors are quite happy with her."

Salonga, who shot to international fame in the world premiere of the London production of "Miss Saigon," will be among five artists performing in the main stage during the ceremony's 50-minute fantasy show.

Rising above the magnificent Khalifa Stadium, Salonga will appear to be floating on a cloud as she sings "Triumph of the One," a stirring ballad written as a tribute to the athletes of the Doha Games.

"We think that Lea Salonga is the best Asian for the role," said Atkins, who created the Opening Ceremonies of the Sydney Olympics.

According to Atkins, the closing rites will be more of a celebration than a formal cultural show.

"The opening is a lot more formal, more technically challenging," he said. "The closing is more of a tribute to the athletes. We wanted to find a story with 1001 Arabian nights as a theme, a sort of fantasy, a story that is a celebration of Asian influences.

"There will be flying genies, flying moons, a beautiful Arabic stage—a fairy tale story. It's simpler than the one we had for the opening but it's very ambitious."

Atkins also said that Gary Valenciano was not included in the opening rites because they had already chosen the performers.

"Gary's role was to create a song to promote the Games," Atkins said. "We chose Gary because of his history as a singer, his popularity, and because there are a lot of Filipino expatriates in Qatar. We had a lot of singers from Asia that we listened to and we decided that Gary's voice is the best suited to the (promotional) song."

Atkins also paid tribute to the more than 1,000 Filipino staff and volunteers in his production outfit.

"Filipinos have been an essential part of these Games," he said. "They're fantastic, as well, and the leaders of Qatar and the organizing committee are very happy with their services."

Silver reward for Pabillore's hard work

By Ted S. Melendres

DOHA, QATAR—INSTEAD OF SHOWing a nervous face, she stepped on to the mat with a smile that could sink a thousand ships.

Ma. Marna Pabillore had reached karate's -53 kilogram kumite finals-assured of at least a silver medal-and said it was reward enough for all the hard work she has invested in her sport.

Not that Pabillore was ready to give up her chance for the gold. She fought Japan's newly crowned world champion, Tomoko Araga, with the same ferocity she displayed in besting three other foes earlier, but fell short this time.

A confident Araga did all the right moves and scored with impunity in the first real exchange of the match to beat the 26-year-old from Cagayan de Oro, 9-1, Tuesday night and win the gold medal at the 15th Asian Games.

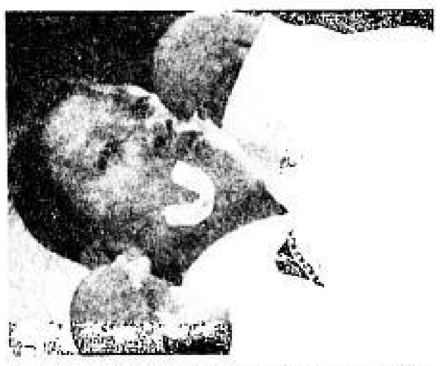
But Pabillore, who belongs to family of karatekas (her sister Victoria is also a member of the national pool) that runs a karate school, was not a bit sore.

"Araga was very tough but I knew I could beat her," she said. "I will prepare next time so that if we meet again I can do better. I will continue practicing to improve my game."

Her coach, the multititled internationalist David Lay, was happy that Pabillore's three-month training in Italy bore fruit.

Pabillore downed North Korea's Ha Ryon-bok, 7-1, and Kazakhstan's Venera Zhetibay, 3-1, to reach the semifinals, where she bested Malaysia's Lim Lee Lee, 3-1, to forge the gold-medal match with the Araga.

"The Japanese was very quick," Lay said. "Marna fought well and she used what she learned in Italy to win her fights here. The silver could have been gold but it's okay because she fought hard."



PABILLORE'S mouthpiece falls. LYN RILLON

Already a winner at the world championships in Tampere, Finland, last month, the 21-year-old Araga said she didn't worry about Pabillore, the Manila Southeast Asian Games gold medalist, because she "was prepared to play against any opponent using her own style."

Pabillore's silver improved on the bronze won by teammate Noel Espinosa in the men's individual kata, also Tuesday.

The 26-year-old Cebuano bowed in the semifinals to eventual champion Tetsuya Furukawa of Japan, 0-5, but not before besting Inthanousone Vilasouk of Laos, 5-0, in the round of eight, Hong Kong's Lee Chi-kit, 4-1, in the quarterfinals and Diaaldeen Al Karaky of Palestine, 5-0, in the final repechage.

"I'm very happy to win the bronze, but not satisfied about the result in the semifinals," Espinosa said. "I want to improve my techniques and go to the next Asian Games."

Two other Filipinos-Mae Soriano and Irineo Toribio-lost in the quarterfinals and failed to land in the medal rounds. Soriano whipped Timor Leste's Anna Maria Paula Pinto, 9-1, but dropped a close 2-1 decision to Vietnam's Vu Thi Nguyet An, 1-2, while Toribio downed the Laotian Vilasouk before getting pipped by Uzbekistan's Ihtiyor Sharapov, 0-1.

Pagunsan, Miñoza in Volvo golf

By Musong R. Castillo

PAGUNSAN

THE PHILIPPINES' JUVIC PAGUNSAN CAME out of nowhere to become the Asian Tour's Rookie of the Year.

Heading into the tour's final tournament for the year—the Volvo Asian Masters—Pagunsan still did not merit a second look, never mind if his ranking in the Order of Merit has put him in the featured flights at the start of the event today in Bangkok, Thailand.

The 28-year-old ex-caddy from Bacolod opens his quest for a first international title as a pro in the $650,000 (around P32.5 million) event reserved for the top 60 players of the tour at the Thai Country Club.

Paired with defending champion Shiv Kapur of India in the 11:38 a.m. flight, Pagunsan, the runner-up in the HK Open two weeks ago, will try to end his year on an even brighter note.

Two other Filipinos, the revered Frankie Miñoza, and one-time tour winner Angelo Que, are also in the field.

Miñoza, for years the top Filipino pro who made his mark in the lucrative and tougher Japanese Tour, tees off at 8:10 together with American Gary Rusnak and Que plays with Manila resident Rick Gibson starting 8:46.

"I feel good. My game is fine and I feel that I can contend (in Thailand)," Pagunsan, who will finish in the Top 10 of the Order of Merit whatever happens here, told the INQUIRER in Filipino, a few days before departing for Bangkok.

Catalan, Folayang assure RP of two bronze medals

EDUARD Folayang (left) battles Kyrgistan's Jaliev Kumar during the quarterfinals.

DOHA, QATAR—FOUR-TIME WORLD CHAMPion Rene Catalan and Eduard Folayang assured the Philippines of two more bronze medals by humbling their quarterfinals opponents in the wushu competition of the 15th Asian Games Tuesday here.

Catalan hardly worked a sweat in scoring a referee stopped contest (RSC) over Laos' Khamsounthone Phoukhong in the first round of their three-round contest.

"Catalan has pretty good chances of winning the gold medal but he should not be overconfident," said Edwin Pimentel, secretary general the Philippine Wushu Federation. "Even Eduard has a good chance."

The only stumbling block in Catalan's gold medal bid in the 52-kilogram division is Vietnam's Phan Quoc Vinh. Phan, a world silver medalist, is also expected to advance to the finals.

Not to be outdone, Folayang, a silver medalist in the world championship in Vietnam, also scored a masterful win over Kyrgistan's Kumar Jaliev in their 70kg division contest.

Folayang, the reigning SEA Games champion, posted similar 5-0 wins in the first two rounds of their match to advance to the semifinals.

Busan Asian Games silver medalist Rexel Nganhayna was not lucky this time, losing to South Korean Kim Jun Sul in two rounds of their 56-kg bout. Nganhayna, also the reigning world champion, proved no match to his rival, losing 1-4 in the first round and 1-3 in the second round.

In taolu (forms) competition, Willy Wang, Peter Quina and Janice Hung plunge into action late Wednesday and today, hoping to bounce back from a not-so-impressive show in the first round.

Wang and Quina will see action in the nanquan (southern style wushu) all-around event, while Janice Hung vies in the taijiquan all-around event. The three, however, have to come up with a flawless performance to break the stranglehold of the Chinese bets.

RP nears...

From page A25

nanquan (Southern broadsword) with a score of 9.62.

China's Wu Caibo led the field with 9.80, followed by Hong Kong's He Jingde, 9.67, and South Korea's Lee Seung-kuen. Another Filipino, Pedro Quina stood 11th with 9.45.

"We are still going for medal finishes in this event," said *chef de mission* Ramirez. "As you can see, the wushu players are not getting distracted by the performances of their rivals."

Janice Hung shared fourth spot with Malaysia's Ng Shin Yii at 9.57, also after two events in the women's taijiquan (Taiji sword).

Malaysia's Chai Fong Ying led the field with 9.67, with Chinese Taipei's Liu Yu-chien tied for second with Japan's Ai Miyaoka at 9.60.

Ceseil Domenios, the other half of the Philippines' diving pair that took the two gold medals in synchronized diving in last year's Southeast Asian Games, qualified to the 3m springboard preliminary despite finishing in a tie for eighth spot with Macau's Choi Sut-ian with 141.10 points.

SEA Games triple-gold medalist Sheila Mae Perez was a no-show as Chinese world champions Wu Minxia and He Zi (22.95) led the qualifiers. Domenios finished fifth in the synchronized 3m springboard final.

Real Spicy hot Presidential Gold Cup favorite

By Musong R. Castillo

UNTOUCHED FOR THE YEAR, REAL Spicy tries to nail down the most prestigious title of the season when he sets out as the fancied bet in a compact field seeing action in the PCSO Presidential Gold Cup this Sunday at the Santa Ana Park in Makati.

Winner of all his nine starts since returning to the tracks in January, the five-year-old chestnut son of Real Quiet out of Spicy Tale has pulverized all fields he's run in, establishing record times along the way to highlight the fine form he's currently in.

To be partnered by regular rider Jessie B. Guce, Real Spicy will actually be seeking to win the event a second time, with defending champion Empire King standing in the way along with a short list of darkhorses led by former Juvenile champion Juggernaut.

The P2.5 million race is spread over the lung-busting 2,050-meter route, a distance which Real Spicy is comfortable with. He chalked up the new all-comers' mark of 2 minutes and 9 seconds in winning the Philtobo Classic two weeks ago.

Empire King, who will be handled by Lord Santos, was in the Philtobo field, while the returning Juggernaut, to be reined in by reigning jockey of the year Jonathan Hernandez, will get a close look at the super horse for the first time in her career.

Native Land (Louie Balboa), War Alert (Val Dilema), Wind Runner (Manolito F. Daquis) and Manhattan, a classy three-year-old to be steered by Dominador Borbe, round out the field gunning for the P1.5 million champion's purse.

A replica of the Gold Cup, which President Macapagal-Arroyo is scheduled to award, is the icing on the cake for the winning connections.

Juggernaut is blazing a comeback trail after missing the Triple Crown series, where she was supposed to be the heavy favorite, because of a career-threatening leg injury.

Her list of conquests includes the PCSO Freedom Cup and the recent Marho Juvenile Fillies Mile.

Waiting for MVP's move

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

I'VE NEVER IN MY life coached a basketball team, not even on the barangay level, but last Tuesday noon I found myself having lunch with a handful of coaches who were scheduled to pay a courtesy call to the new BAP president, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada at the Senate.

Headed by former PBA cager Fritz Gaston, the BAP's official representative to the Fiba, the group collectively calls itself NBCC for National Basketball Coaches Commission.

According to Fritz, every Fiba-accredited country has such an association, which is tasked to conduct coaching clinics and seminars nationwide on a regular basis. The candidate who finishes the curriculum successfully is thereafter accredited by the NBCC, making him eligible to coach on all levels, including the national level.

***

"Every country, every association has its own format for the program, which is submitted to the Fiba. We patterned ours after the Canadian format which has proven to be the most effective," said Fritz, who announced that anyone can join the association.

Among the cage gurus present at the dining table Bong Go of the College of St. Benilde appears to be the acknowledged scholar. It is his responsibility to keep abreast of the latest technology so he can share it with the rest.

Among the other members of the group are UM's Loreto Tolentino, Amang Ladores who now coaches in the United States, former PBA cager Ronnie Cahanding, and Raymond Celis, basketball program director of La Salle Greenhills who attended the Fiba's World Association of Basketball Coaches Congress with Fritz in Tokyo, Japan, last August.

***

I had tagged along with Raymond that day to try and squeeze out from the senator everything he had talked about with PLDT president Manny V. Pangilinan during their chance encounter at the Allado wedding.

Unfortunately, there was nothing more to say except that MVP had promised to call him before Christmas so they could sit down to have an earnest talk about the basketball situation.

Jinggoy said he has been waiting for MVP's call.

***

Yesterday I finally got to ask PBA chair Ricky Vargas the question that had been left hanging since our last talk with MVP about a month ago: Is MVP still interested in the SBP?

Ricky said both he and his boss have not had time to focus on this matter for the past weeks, because of the Metro Pacific bid for the Maynilad and the PITIK project which, he said, will bring in a total of P30 billion in revenues to the Philippine government.

"We have been very busy," said Ricky, "but I am trying to get him back to refocus on basketball, which he loves so much. The trouble is, much as MVP wants to help basketball, basketball is making it very hard for him to help."

In the last PBA board meeting, Ricky said the governors discussed the league's schedule for the next conference.

"Because we are committed to the national team, we need to know where Philippine basketball is headed in the next few months so we can adjust our timetable accordingly. It's not a deadline we're imposing on anybody," he explained.

***

No wonder this PBA team is wallowing somewhere down under in team standings.

The coach, according to one of the key players, has probably never heard of the word burnout.

"We're pushed to the limit physically. We work out a total of six hours daily—weights, scrimmage, drills, we're always so exhausted," said the player.

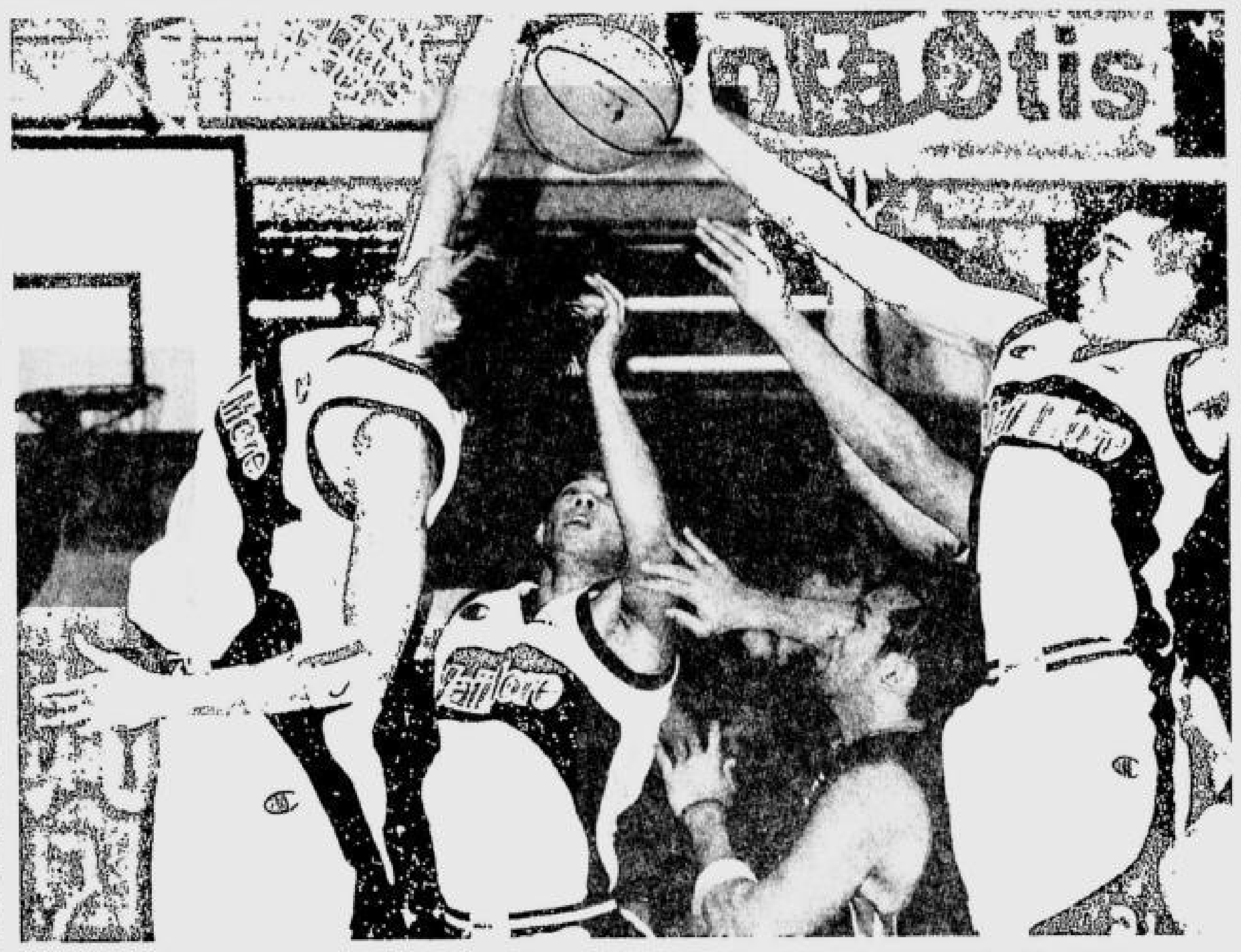
Because of this, the frequently used players are prone to cramps and fatigue during actual games.

***

When Junel Baculi sat on the Harbour Centre bench about a week ago, the press covering the PBL beat immediately started to speculate.

Was head coach Jorge Galent about to lose his job?

"Definitely not!" replied Harbour Centre owner Mikee Romero. "Jorge is my *barkada*. I hired Junel as a senior mentor to Jorge because the team needs a drillmaster."



HARBOUR Centre's Gerwin Gaco takes on a battery of Mail and More standouts—Elmer Espiritu(9), Ronjay Buenafe(32), Jorel Canizares—in this battle for the loose ball.

RYAN LIM

Comets seek lead versus Moneymen

MAIL & MORE WILL ATTEMPT TO create a space for itself among the leaders even as Cebuana Lhuillier Pera Padala tries to move out of the low rungs when they clash today in the 2007 PBL Silver Cup at the UST gym.

The Comets will be protecting a three-game winning streak, the latest being their 66-63 triumph over leader Hapee Toothpaste last week.

But they will have to make extra effort in containing Pera Padala which has UAAP MVP Kenneth Bono in its fold.

Burly JR Quinahan will be manning the fort for the Comets against the equally massive 6-foot-5 Bono in a highly anticipated match-up between the league's big guys.

Mail & More, at third place with a 4-2 record, needs a win to tie Hapee and Henkel Sista-St. Benilde which have identical 5-2 records.

The Moneymen are in the lower strata of the standings at sixth and seventh places with Harbour Centre which, just like them, is reeling from two straight losses.

"The boys displayed great character the last time after coming back from a huge deficit. But we should stop from there," said Mail & More coach Lawrence Chongson. "We have to play with lots of enthusiasm against Pera Padala."

The 6-foot-5 Quinahan, who scored an average of 16.6 points in the last three games, will be the main man but he will need ample support from Mike Bravo, Wynsjohn Ty and rookie Jim Viray.

Aside from Bono, the Moneyman will try to get a boost from Macky Escalona, Doug Kramer, Erick dela Cuesta and Mark Abadia.

In the other game, TeleTech will be gunning for a third straight win when it faces winless Kettle Korn-University of Santo Tomas at 4 p.m.

Though the Titans have advantage in height, heft and morale, they can't take the Pop Kings for granted, especially prolific scorer Jojo Duncil.

The Tigers standout Duncil is leading the league in scoring after exploding for 30 and 29 points, respectively, in the team's last two games.

Marc Anthony Reyes

GAMES TODAY
(UST gym)
2 p.m. Mail & More vs CLPera Padala
4 p.m. Kettle Korn-UST vs TeleTech

Archers shoot down Warriors

By Marc Anthony Reyes

LA SALLE STAYED ON TRACK FOR A smashing comeback even as Jose Rizal University broke free from its whipping boy mold as they defeated their respective foes last night to arrange a finals duel in the Fil-Oil Flying V Homegrown Cup at the Philsports Arena.

The Archers hardly broke a sweat in defeating University of the East, 76-67, to make the finals in this inaugural collegiate league which they hope would announced their grand comeback after getting sidelined by a one-year suspension from the UAAP.

The game also highlighted the bench battle between brothers Franz Pumaren of La Salle and Dindo Pumaren of University of the East.

Turned out the younger Pumaren still has a lot to learn from his multititled sibling.

The Archers leaned on Rico Maierhofer, Ty Tang and Bader Malabes to put the Warriors at bay, taking a 29-10 lead early in the second quarter and never looked back.

Maierhofer scored 13 points and grabbed seven rebounds plus three assists and three steals.

Earlier, Jayson Nocom sparked a second quarter rally as Jose Rizal University ditched Far Eastern, 80-64, to also make the finals.

Southwoods' Chairman's Cup blasts off

CARMONA, CAVITE—MANILA Southwoods Golf & Country Club caps the year with the staging of the Chairman's Cup which opens today at the Masters and Legends courses.

Southwoods chair Robert John Sobrepeña and reigning titlists Richie Santos (low Net) and Lito Abiera (Class A) are among 600 participants vying for fabulous hole-in-one prizes, including a brand-new car in the 18-hole medal competition. Tee-off time is 6:30 a.m.

According to Sports & Games Committee chair Butch Campos, a Mitsubishi Lancer GLX-Manual is at stake at the masters' 17th hole. Royal Caribbean International-Baron Travel Corp. offers an eight-day, seven-night Alaskan cruise with Korean Air business-class tickets for two and a golf cart from Turf Company at hole 13.

Completing the ace prizes are the SYM Bonus 100 cc motorbike, Wilson golf set, an El Nido vacation package with airfare for two and a Nike golf bag plus P100,000 worth of Nike items from Pacsports.

Maninding keeps Autocross title

ULY MANINDING SHOWED HIS MASTERY of the identical tracks to retain his title in the Shago Racing Autocross Series.

Maninding also won the overall championship in the inaugural season of the event participated in by drivers from TACP, Club Mitsubishi, Grupo Toyota, Volkswagen, Cabanatuan Auto Club, Bulacan Auto Club, Explorer Motorworks, Big Chill and Team Art.

Speedzone supported the event, which once gathered a record field of 150 drivers in a single leg.

One of the highlights of the Shago Racing season is the car display at the Aseana Power Station.

Shago Racing also hosted the Autocross event coinciding with the 75th anniversary celebration of the Automobile Association of the Philippines on May 7.

Among the celebrities who joined the competition were Andre Palma, Angelo Barreto and Freddie Webb.

MANINDING: En route to victory

Ozamiz Cotta enters s'finals

DAVAO CITY—BACK-TO-BACK CHAMPION Ozamiz Cotta barged into the semifinals with a 50-45 victory over Bacchus/Harbour Centre-San Juan Tuesday night in the 2006 Spring Cooking Oil-NBC National Cup at the Maa Play Site gym here.

Ozamiz's Melfred Sampilo and Marlon Basco emerged as the only double digit scorers in the slow-paced contest marked by air-tight defense employed by the contending teams.

Sampilo scored 14 points while Basco added 11 as Mayor Reynaldo Parojinog's Ozamiz cagers arranged a semifinal meeting with the winner between Pagadian and Tribu Sugbu. The loss ended Bacchus/Harbour's title aspiration.

San Juan's ploy of milking the clock nearly worked as pointguard Marlon Kalaw masterfully orchestrated San Juan's plan to shoot just before time runs out on its ball possession.

But in the end, the experience and talent of the Cotta Shrine boys spelled the difference.

RJ Masbang paced the team of businessman Mikee Romero and coach Lawrence Chongson with nine points.

The scores:

OZAMIZ 50—Sampilo 14, Basco 11, Cavan 6, Dacia 4, Liangco 4, Nicdao 3, Alvarez 3, Bat-og 3, Caylan 2, Gatumbato 0, Lapera 0.

BACCHUS/HARBOUR 45—Masbang 9, Kalaw 8, Retaga 8, Alminario 8, Sta. Cruz 7, Williams 3, Soriano 2, Natividad 0.

Quarters: 11-11, 28-19, 38-35, 50-45.

NCA derby today

THE SECOND DAY OF THE NATIONAL Cockers Association (NCA) derby will be held today at the Pasay City cockpit. The who's who in gamefowl breeding and cockfighting will battle it out for the title.

The first day of the derby on Dec. 12 was a huge success, drawing the biggest names in American and Filipino cockfighting.

Leading qualifiers are Roger Segismundo, Governor Reyes, Jet Fernando, Mike Romulo, Boy Marso and Col. Katigbak with 3.0 points each. Manny Santos followed with 2.5 points.

Congressman Pichay, Tony Open, Rey Briones, Secretary Puno, Boy Royo, JV Magsaysay, Mike Escanlar, Rep. Iggy Arroyo, Monching Cecilio, Luis Bersamin Jr., Ruel Ricafort, Representative Planas, Joey Dy, Patrick Antonio, Louie Cua, Toto Sevilla and Manny Pacquiao are also in the running with 2.0 points each.

Rep. Gerry Espina, Tony Marfori, Gov. Joson, Gerry Ramos, Rudy Albano, Jesry Palma, Congressman Lagbas, Monching Cecilio, engineer Berin, Robert Yu, William Go, engineer Canlas, Rep. Miranda, Governor Ynares and Richard Bates will also duke it out for the NCA win.

Part of the proceeds will go to the NCA's scholarship fund for college students at the UP-Los Baños and Miriam Academy in Quezon City.

SPORTSWATCH

Sea Horses stun Doves

THE PATTS COLLEGE OF AERONAUTICS REFUSED to bow down to pressure in the final minute and came away with a 77-72 upset of defending champion St. Francis in the 14th Petron-National Capital Region Athletic Association (NCRAA) men's basketball tournament. The PATTS Sea Horses leaned on the heroics of RK Cui and JB Ferreria in pulling off their third win in five games and boosting their chances at the Arellano Legarda gym. The surprise win allowed the Arellano University Chiefs to assume the top spot at 5-1 after they downed the De La Salle-Dasmariñas Patriots, 74-69. The Doves dropped to second spot at 5-2, while the Asian College of Science and Technology Lightnings slipped behind with their 5-3 card.

Fastest Win at Las Piñas up

WITH OVER 80 FIGHTS LINED UP, LAS PIÑAS Coliseum's Fastest Win One-Cock Ulutan starts at 10 a.m. today with a total P250,000 in guaranteed prize at stake. The fastest win champion, to be chosen after every 10 fights, will get P10,000. Each winner also gets P1,500 as bonus, said hosts Bigboy and Ronjay Gian. For the overall fastest win champion, P20,000; second, P15,000 and third, P10,000. Meanwhile, the 3-cock derby on Saturday, Dec. 16, comes next with Baldo Perez as host. Coliseum manager Alex Tobias and Rudy Sayaman will stage the Christmas 4-cock derby on Dec. 23. For info, call 873-1040 and 874-3910.

SPORTS

Chinese squad gets its revenge

DOHA—CHINA WHIPPED ARCHRIVALS SOUTH Korea, 68-52, to advance to the Asian Games men's basketball semifinals here Tuesday, avenging their nail-biting loss in the 2002 final.

Yin Jianlian, a 7-foot-4 center, led China's scoring with 18 points as the 2005 Asian champions never looked back after opening the first quarter 19-13 and leading 41-25 at half-time.

Kim Joo-Sung, one of South Korea's leading scorers, was sent off with his fifth foul in the third quarter while China went into the final quarter 49-37.

China crashed to hosts South Korea 102-100 in overtime at the Busan Asian Games, giving up their 16-year stranglehold on the Asiad title.

The 2002 final was significant as giant centre Yao Ming's last game before joining the US National Basketball Association.

China will battle for a final berth on Wednesday against Jordan who beat Kazakhstan, 99-91, in overtime in an earlier quarter-final.

In the last quarterfinal, hosts Qatar outlasted Taiwan, 103-96, in two overtimes to reach the semi-finals for the first time ever.

"We play hard in defense. But if you look at the score tonight. I don't think we defended well," said Qatar Joey Stiebing. "We gave up over 90 points. Normally, if we give up eighty points, we don't win."

Qatar will face Iran who beat Japan, 68-64.

"We played this game for every Chinese player who has (ever) played against Korea," said Wang Zhizhi, 27, the first-ever Chinese to sign with the NBA.

Wang, who did not play in Busan as he was dropped from the national squad because he was tied up with his preparations for a new NBA contract, scored 16 points in the match against Korea.

"I feel grateful," said China coach John Kazlauskas, a Lithuanian. "We were under little bit pressure because our opponent did not start well in this tournament but played well in its last game."

"We had some foul problems with Wang Zhizhi," he said. "But finally we did not play bad defense. If you play good defense under pressure, you'll be okay."

"I told myself not to be too relaxed and not to foul," said Wang, who committed four personal fouls.

Yin, a 19-year-old top prospect for next year's NBA draft, has led China's scoring all the way with an average of 18 points. *AFP*

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2006 ASIAN GAMES MEDAL TALLY AS OF DEC 13, 2006; 8:36 PM

Nation	G	S	B	Total	Nation	G	S	B	Total
China	142	77	59	278	Vietnam	2	9	7	18
South Korea	48	44	75	167	Mongolia	2	5	7	14
Japan	47	60	68	175	Indonesia	2	2	12	16
Kazakhstan	19	15	34	68	Syria	2	0	3	5
Thailand	10	13	24	47	UAE	1	3	2	6
Taiwani	9	6	27	42	Jordan	1	3	1	5
Qatar	8	10	9	27	Lebanon	1	0	2	3
Saudi Arabia	8	0	5	13	Tajikistan	1	0	2	3
India	7	17	20	44	Myanmar	0	3	4	7
Bahrain	7	8	4	19	Kyrgyzstan	0	2	5	7
Malaysia	6	15	12	33	Sri Lanka	0	1	2	3
Uzbekistan	6	10	11	27	Iraq	0	1	1	2
Hong Kong	6	10	7	23	Turkmenistan	0	1	0	1
Iran	5	13	12	30	Pakistan	0	1	0	1
North Korea	5	8	13	26	Nepal	0	0	3	3
Singapore	5	5	11	21	Macau	0	0	2	2
Philippines	3	5	9	17	Afghanistan	0	0	1	1
Kuwait	3	4	2	9	Bangladesh	0	0	1	1

China way beyond reach

DOHA, QATAR—WITH JUST TWO FULL days of competition left in the 15th version of the Asian Games, there were a few certainties:

— China will again top the gold medal list, and likely go over the record 150 that it set at the 2002 games in Busan. Going into competition early Wednesday, it had 137 golds and 269 medals overall. South Korea and Japan looked set to duel for second-place honors, with South Korea leading 47 gold medals to 46.

— The host country, looking to use these games as an early dry run for a likely bid for the 2016 Olympics, had something very special to look forward to: its soccer team will play Persian Gulf neighbor Iraq in the gold medal final on Friday afternoon, just hours before the closing ceremonies begin. Qatar's win over Iran on Tuesday was met with plenty of raucous, firecracker-throwing celebrations, with bumper-to-bumper traffic around Doha well into the early-morning hours. Its basketball team could also be in the gold medal final Friday if it beats Iran in a semifinal on Wednesday night.

— The games would have a drug taint, regardless of whether any more positive tests are announced over the next two days. An Iraqi bodybuilder was disqualified after 134 doses of the performance-enhancing steroid nandrolone were found in his luggage by authorities at Doha's international airport, the fifth doping-related disqualification announced in four days at the Doha Games. The other four were from positive doping tests.

— The Asian Games brought rain to the desert. Games spokesman Ahmed Abdulla Al Khulaifi said Wednesday that Doha airport had registered 53 millimeters (just over 2 inches) of rain in December, the fourth-highest total in December in 44 years. "We hope not to add too much to the total before the closing ceremonies," said Al Khulaifi, although thunderstorms were forecast for later Wednesday and showers for Thursday.

In the women's tennis final Wednesday, Zheng Jie added to China's gold total when she beat fourth-seeded Sania Mirza of India, 6-4, 1-6, 6-1. In the deciding set, Zheng went up two service breaks to lead 4-1, then won her next service game at love.

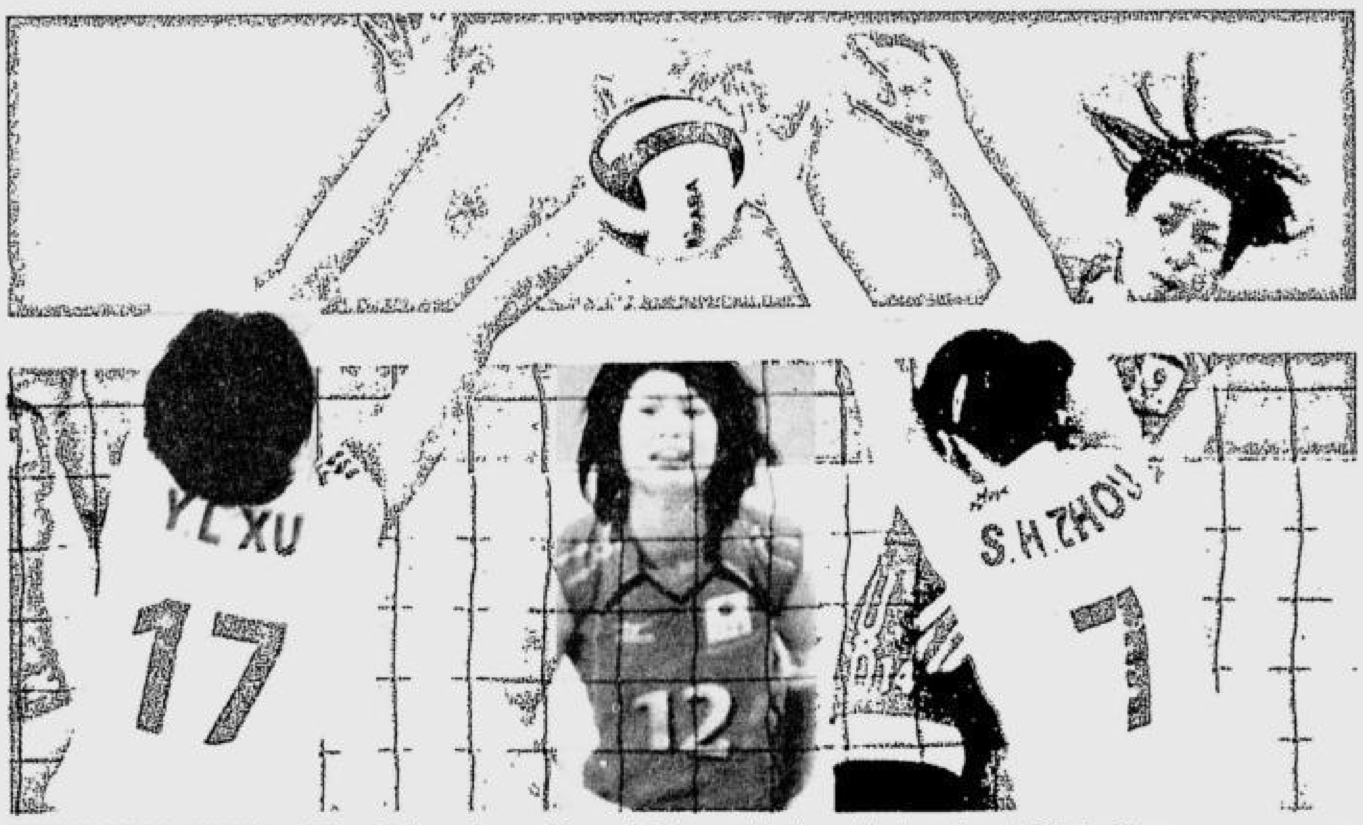
In the final game, Mirza double-faulted twice—on the last two points of the match.

Mirza still has another chance to collect gold Wednesday, partnering Leander Paes in the mixed doubles.

In early gold medals Wednesday, South Korea won the women's team gold in archery, defeating China 215-209 at the Lusail Shooting Complex.

Park Sung-hyun, a member of South Korea's four-person team, said she was surprised by the popularity of the sport during the games.

"I am so grateful for the interest that has grown for this event, which has not been so popular previously," said Park. *AP*



CHINA'S Xu Yunli (left) and Zhou Suhong (second from right) try to block a spike from Japan's Shuka Oyam. AFP

Gold caps rebirth of Thai boxer

DOHA—REINCARNATION IS CENTRAL TO THE beliefs of millions of Thais, but there can be few in the kingdom with as spectacular a rebirth as Manus Boonjumnong.

After winning Olympic gold in Athens, the boxer enjoyed the giddy highs of fame and fortune before losing the lot in the card games and drinking dens of Bangkok.

His strutting, triumphant return to the ring at the Asian Games in Doha, however, suggests his life has come full circle.

"My problems are behind me now. I made mistakes, it was a difficult time, but I have to look forward now," Manus told Reuters after a typically flamboyant victory over South Korea's Shin Myung-hoon in the light welterweight final.

"It's all about winning the Olympic gold medal again now."

Manus, who named his son Athens, won the hearts of a nation when he broke down in tears after Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej called to congratulate him on his success.

But the celebrity and reported $600,000 his gold medal earned him disappeared in a blaze of ugly headlines as Manus swapped the ring for Thailand's more tempting social scene.

Without a fight since Athens, Manus was on the verge of being washed up at 26 before Thai boxing chiefs took the matter into their own hands, sending him to a boxing boot camp in Cuba without a penny to his name.

"It meant a lot to me to come back and win gold after so long without a fight," said Manus, who carried a portrait of his king into the ring after the final. *Reuters*

An up-and-down year ends with Woods still on top

THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORNIA—Tiger Woods won US PGA Tour player of the year on Tuesday for the eighth time, and the numbers looked familiar. He won multiple majors for the fourth time, and more tournaments than anyone else.

Woods won his first tournament of the year, then finished his season with six consecutive victories.

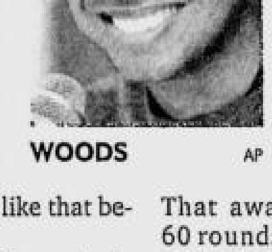
In between, he disappeared from golf for more than two months to mourn the death of his father.

"I knew I had to go through—like anyone—the grieving process, and I had never done anything like that before," Woods said.

"The hardest thing for me to do was play golf. Usually, people go to work to get away from a loss like that. But that's when I thought of my dad. He introduced me to the game of golf. He taught me a lot of life lessons on the golf course.

"When I came back and started working on my fundamentals. I learned them from my dad."

The award—also called the Jack Nicklaus Trophy—is decided by a vote of the players, although the PGA Tour does not disclose the results or even who finished second.



WOODS AP

The award began in 1990, and no one else has won it more than twice.

Woods, who won eight times, also won the Arnold Palmer Award for leading the money list at $9.9 million (euro7.48 million), and he won the Byron Nelson Award for the lowest scoring average at 68.11.

The tour's scoring award only requires a minimum of 50 rounds, and Woods played 55.

Jim Furyk won the Vardon Trophy from the PGA of America with an average of 68.86. That award requires at least 60 rounds.

South Africa's Trevor Immelman was voted rookie of the year after winning the Western Open and finishing seventh on the money list with more than $3.8 million (euro2.87 million), highest money ranking by any PGA Tour rookie.

Comeback player of the year went to Steve Stricker, who failed to get out of the second stage of Q-school last year.

A three-time PGA Tour winner, Stricker had to rely on sponsor's exemptions and played only four times the first four months of the season. *AP*

Nuggets ground Hawks behind Melo's heroics

ATLANTA—CARMELO ANTHONY SCORED 26 points to help the Denver Nuggets pull away in the fourth quarter and beat the Hawks 100-87 for a rare win in Atlanta on Tuesday.

The Nuggets had lost 15 of their last 16 games in Atlanta, but took over in the second half after the Hawks had opened up a 54-43 halftime lead.

Denver (12-7) rallied to lead 71-70 after three quarters and turned the game into a rout in the fourth, the Hawks missing their first 13 shots to fall behind by 17 points in the final quarter.

Anthony led the way as the Nuggets rebounded from a 105-90 loss to Dallas in the first game of their road trip on Saturday in which Anthony had just 18 points.

Earl Boykins had 19 points off the bench for the Nuggets, who had lost eight of their past 11 to Atlanta. The 5-foot-5 Boykins was eight-for-11 from the field.

Marcus Camby hauled down 17 rebounds for Denver, which out-rebounded Atlanta 46-36. JR Smith chipped in with 17 points.

Atlanta (8-12) lost its third straight game, shooting just 41 percent to 49 percent for the Nuggets.

Josh Smith led the Hawks with 21 points. Atlanta was once again without leading scorer Joe Johnson (28.7 ppg), who sat out his second straight game with a strained right calf.

Smith also had 10 rebounds and Tyronn Lue added 16 points for the losers.

Michael Redd scored 22 points as the Milwaukee Bucks rallied to edge the Seattle SuperSonics, 94-93.

Andrew Bogut had 16 points, nine rebounds and six assists and hit the go-ahead free throw with 1:14 left.

Kobe Bryant had 23 points, eight rebounds and seven assists as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Houston Rockets 102-94. Yao Ming had 26 points for the Rockets.

Meanwhile, Philadelphia 76ers guard Allen Iverson was nearly shipped to the Charlotte Bobcats but his unhappiness at joining the newest NBA team reportedly doomed the deal.

The Philadelphia Inquirer, citing an unnamed course, reported Wednesday that the 76ers had reached terms for a package of players from the team formed in 2004 but Iverson's feelings doomed the deal. *Reuters, AFP*

COMPLETE NBA RESULTS: Denver 100, Atlanta 87; Milwaukee 94, Seattle 93; LA Lakers 102, Houston 94; Golden State 126, Sacramento 113

ATLANTA Hawks forward Marvin Williams flies high over the Denver Nuggets defense for a dunk in Atlanta, Georgia . REUTERS

'Old school' Sloan notches win No. 1,000

SALT LAKE CITY—THE NATIONAL Basketball Association (NBA) is loaded with youth, talent and tattoos, plus old-school coach Jerry Sloan who has been patrolling the sidelines at the Utah Jazz for nearly two decades.

"I'm old," said Sloan. "You can call it old school or whatever you want. I just was always taught at a very young age that if you're going to play basketball you play to win."

Sloan, 64, recorded his 1,000th career coaching victory on Monday, becoming just the fifth coach in NBA history to reach the milestone.

Having coached a total of 1,663 games, he has the seventh best winning percentage in NBA history and has taken the Jazz to two NBA Finals appearances (1997 and 1998) and five Midwest Division titles.

With Sloan leading the way the Utah Jazz have made their fastest start, at 16-5, behind a blend of veterans Carlos Boozer, Andrei Kirilenko and Matt Harpring and second-year guard Deron Williams.

Sloan has guided Jazz teams to 16 consecutive winning seasons, 15 trips to the NBA playoffs (1989-2003) and 10 50-win seasons. *Reuters*

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PNOC-EDC shares soar in stock debut

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo rings the ceremonial bell at the Ayala trading floor of the Philippine Stock Exchange in Makati City to mark the successful listing of PNOC-Energy Development Corp. Energy Secretary Rafael Lotilla looks on. EDWIN BACASMAS

Successful listing seen as good omen for '07

SHARES IN PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORP., WHICH GENerates electricity from volcanic hot springs, jumped 42 percent in their market debut after the firm raised P16.68 billion or $337 million in the biggest Philippine initial public offering this year.

The strong debut of PNOC-EDC is a good omen for 2007 after a dearth of listings in 2006 when low borrowing costs encouraged firms to turn to debt for funding and investors were put off by the country's opaque, illiquid stock market.

"This shows confidence and belief in the Philippines and the stock market in general," said Oliver Sy, a trader at Evergreen Securities. "I bought shares during the offer and I sold at P4.50. I feel great."

As cheers and confetti rained down on the stock exchange floor, PNOC-EDC stock closed at a high of P4.55 yesterday, against its offer price of P3.20, the top end of the indicated range.

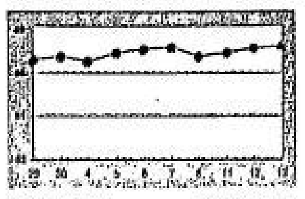
Around P18 billion worth of shares changed hands, nine times the average daily value of stock traded. The closing price valued PNOC-EDC at P66.3 billion or $1.34 billion, making it the country's 10th biggest stock.

The geothermal arm of the state-run Philip-

PNOC-EDC/ B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



NOVEMBER DECEMBER

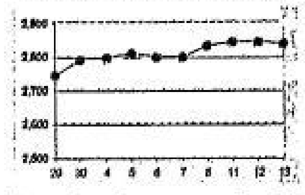
PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 49.425 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 13, 2006

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

PNOC-EDC listing draws interest

SHARE PRICES CLOSED MIXED YESTERday as investors cashed in on recent gains in select blue chips while buying stocks in a newly listed state energy firm, dealers said.

PNOC Energy Development Corp., a unit of state-owned Philippine National Oil Co., took the spotlight as its shares surged more than 42 percent on debut that followed the power producer's oversubscribed initial public offering.

The composite index lost 4.96 points to 2,835.86 after moving between 2,821.37 and 2,847.14.

PNOC-EDC/ B2

Transco bidding moved anew to Jan. 22

By Abigail L. Ho

BIDDING FOR THE 25-YEAR NATIONAL Transmission Corp. (Transco) concession has been pushed back again to Jan. 22, 2007, from the original schedule of Dec. 20.

In a briefing following the listing ceremonies for Philippine National Oil Co. Energy Development Corp. yesterday, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the extra month would give potential bidders more time to review the bidding terms and clarify other remaining issues.

The state-run Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), the agency tasked with auctioning off the Transco concession, earlier said that it would make sense to give prospective bidders more time to review the bidding terms due to the complicated nature of the transaction.

"Due to numerous and complex issues raised by all the pre-qualified bidders during the second round of comments, PSALM decided to open another window of opportunity for the bidders to clarify their concerns," PSALM president Nieves Osorio had said.

PSALM is still in the process of finalizing the amended and revised bidding procedures for the Transco concession.

According to PSALM, the final transaction documents are critical to the bidding process as these were the "execution versions" of the bid transaction documents that incorporate the comments of the investor groups. These include the direct agreement and the concession agreement.

"The privatization, bids and award committee (PBAC) will evaluate the implications of the suggestions made and amendments proposed by the pre-qualified bidders," Osorio said. "It is the sole discretion of the committee to accept the suggestions and/or amendments it considers relevant. The appropriate revisions will be incorporated in the final transaction documents."

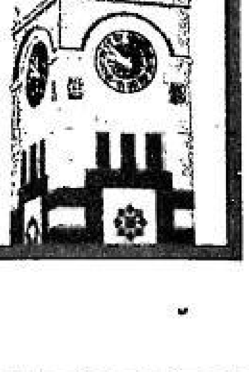
PSALM will provide the pre-qualified bidders with copies of the transaction documents that contain all PBAC-approved amendments. A supplemental bid bulletin will also be issued to inform the prospective bidders of the change in schedule.

Only three groups are qualified to submit final financial and technical bids for the 25-year Transco concession.

One of the three groups that will be vying for the Transco concession is the consortium of Triratna Holdings Corp. (60 percent), Malaysia's Tenaga Nasional Berhad (5 percent) and Newbridge Asia IV LP (35 percent).

Local firm Triratna is represented by SM Investments vice chair Henry Sy Jr.,

TRANSCO/ B2



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Demotion job

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

DESPITE HIS DEATH-DEFYING FEAT, Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales is getting a lot of media flak lately.

In fact, some dubious media outfits have been hitting Morales nonstop for the past three months over the so-called "hot meat" issue.

This is the commissioner who, as of last October, already raised the bureau's collection by about P46 billion, compared to the whole of 2005.

And he has been on the job for less than a year! In my book, such a feat makes Morales a pretty good commissioner. It means the smugglers are having a hard time.

Well, I know that the guy is getting rave reviews from the business community. The legitimate business community, that is! Right, Donald?

And so who is after the head of Morales. Word goes around BOC that one of his own people in the bureau must be lusting after his position.

In turn, the son of his mother perhaps is getting some, er, "support" from certain groups whose, er, "business" suffered because of Morales' anti-smuggling campaign.

The demolition job started when, in October, the BOC seized a shipment of meat (declared as "frozen mackerel") from China, which was a "banned" item.

Morales ordered the entire shipment to be buried in a landfill in Pampanga, and criminal charges were filed against the importer (a certain Asian Golden Ark).

Local officials in Pampanga howled against the order. The shipment found its way back to Manila. It was later put in the incinerator.

But the thing is, as soon as word got out about the smuggling attempt, media reports already implicated the office of the commission (i.e. Morales).

They quoted supposedly "independent operations" conducted by a BOC unit called CIIS—the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service.

Look at that—the CIIS, of all units in the BOC, is the most accountable group for any smuggling and pilferage that may happen in this country.

Yet it seems to have the loudest mouth over the "hot meat" issue. Why? Well, it seems somebody got a de facto demotion when Morales got the job as BOC head.

Some BOC insiders tell me that the CIIS head, deputy commissioner Celso Templo, was also angling to become the BOC head.

They also talked about a meeting among BOC officials and media people in a popular beerhouse in Marilao, Bulacan, during which the demolition job on Morales was apparently put into play.

Unfortunately for them, Gloriaetta actually handpicked Morales. She even made him the head of Task Force Anti-Smuggling, which she created to merge all anti-smuggling activities.

Thus, for the very first time, a BOC official was made head of the task force. What does it tell us? Simply, Morales has the full trust and confidence of Gloriaetta!

What I am saying is, with Gloriaetta supporting him and with the business community cheering him, the man must be doing a good job.

That's why the bad guys do not like him. That's why some groups are supporting somebody in BOC to help the bad guys get rid of him. Believe me, it is about to backfire.

* * *

AT LEAST FOUR neighborhoods in Quezon City are up in arms against the high-rise condo project of the high profile Federal Land.

Among the owners of the company is the former president of the Federation of Filipino Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Anyway, opposed to the project are the Montgomery Place Homeowners Association, the Homeowners of Barangay New Manila, Mariana Homeowners Association, and Le Mariche.

Federal Land calls the project "The Capital Towers," a 1,300-unit three-tower compound on 8,800 square meters of project on E. Rodriguez Avenue.

In comparison, as the residents in the area pointed out in their position paper submitted to the city council, Montgomery Place has only 341 single detached units on 70,000 square meters.

In other words, the residents are worried over the impact of Federal Land's huge project on the neighborhood's water supply, sewerage, garbage, traffic and parking.

Here's the thing: Federal Land is still working on a city council resolution to exempt its project from the city's zoning ordinance.

Well, the project will house way too many people that what the city government, originally, estimated to be just right for the infrastructure in the area.

Also, the homeowners associations are asking the city council to deny Federal Land all applications for permits, based on its current plan and concept.

They noted that Federal Land has yet to get "environmental compliance certificate" from the DENR.

In a way, they are asking the city council to compel Federal Land to change its project to follow the building height limit under National Building Code, and the ratio of parking area to the number of units.

And so Federal Land still lacks the permits for the project.

Word from the residents in the area has it that, despite such a drawback, Federal Land goes on an open and rampant selling of condominium units.

So who said it's difficult to do business in this country?

* * *

WE ALL know that almost three months ago, the court ordered the rehabilitation of the controversial College Assurance Plan, or CAP.

But the court also, er, "requested" the SEC to "have a second look on the business of CAP," in connection with the CAP application for renewal of its SEC license.

Guess what—from what heard, the SEC is not lifting a finger. Up to now!

Metrobank sees growth in '07 net profit topping 20%

By Doris C. Dumlao

METROPOLITAN BANK AND Trust Co., the country's biggest bank, expects net profits for the full year growing by more than 20 percent, topping the bank's performance in 2005.

Metrobank president Arthur Ty yesterday told reporters that this year would likely yield a higher growth in net earnings, supported by "fairly decent interest margins and trading gains" as well as prudent cost-control measures.

In 2005, Metrobank posted P4.3 billion in net profits. "But next year is a bit uncertain," Ty said. "Interest rates are so low."

Ty said loan growth in the Philippines has been flat over the last few years and has not necessarily been boosted by the fall in interest rates.

Based on the latest data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, lending by the country's commercial banks grew at the fastest pace in 16 months at 6.1 percent in September as against the 2.5-percent expansion in August. It was the highest lending growth rate posted by the sector since May 2005, when a 6.4 percent growth was recorded.

The growth in commercial bank lending was driven mainly by loans to financial institutions, real estate and business services sector (31.2 percent), community, social and personal services sector (5.5 percent), mining and quarrying (4.5 percent) and transportation, storage and communication (2 percent).

However, the increase in lending to these sectors was partly offset by the declines in lending to construction (11 percent); manufacturing (9.2 percent), electricity, gas and water (6.2 percent) and agriculture (1.5 percent).

Ty said Metrobank's performance next year would depend on the bank's reorganization efforts as well as how much demand for loans would pick up.

"I don't expect it to be very high. I think people are still on a wait-and-see (stance). They are waiting for demand to pick up. They are waiting for stability," he said.

Metrobank's consolidated assets amounted to P629.6 billion as of end-September, an increase of P43.1 billion from P586.5 billion in end-2005. This was also P35.7 billion higher than the consolidated assets posted during the first half of 2006 at P593.9 billion.

Metrobank owns the second biggest thrift bank in the country, Philippine Savings Bank, as well as investment house First Metro Investment Corp. It has more than 800 local and international branches, offices, subsidiaries and affiliates.

The bank's net consolidated loans, discounts and advances reached P275.5 billion, an increase of P11.3 billion from the P264.2 billion as of the end of the second quarter.

Piltel pays $235.1-M debts; starts 2007 debt-free

By Riza T. Olchondra

PILIPINO TELEPHONE CORP. (PILTEL) has settled its remaining debts of about $235.1 million in various currencies to start 2007 free of debt, the country's third-biggest cellular operator said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Piltel paid $106.23 million, P2.69 billion and 8.66 billion yen to various creditors last Dec. 4.

Of the total prepaid debts, $161 million was paid to parent company Smart Communications Inc., which owns 92 percent of Piltel. Smart, in turn, is the mobile phone unit of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.

Earlier in June, Piltel prepaid $176 million in foreign obligations. All in, Piltel prepaid $411.1 million in debts this year.

According to Piltel president and CEO Napoleon Nazareno, Piltel now has a "minimal" debt of $1 million owed to various bondholders who did not participate in the telco's recent debt restructuring exercise.

To keep its momentum going well into 2007, Piltel will implement a "capital reorganization" plan in the first half of next year. It is expected that the capital reorganization will enable Piltel to begin paying dividends, first to its preferred shareholders and then to its common shareholders.

"Our strengthened balance sheet will be augmented by the substantial cash flows being generated by our 6.4 million Talk 'N Text subscribers," Nazareno said.

Piltel recorded a net profit of P8.45 billion for the first nine months of 2006, about 22-percent higher than the P6.93 billion it posted in the same period of 2005.

Transco bidding . . .

From page B1

United Laboratories Corp. chair Joselito Campos Jr., and San Miguel Corp. president Ramon Ang.

The consortium of Citadel Holdings Corp. (60 percent) and Terna SPA (40 percent), represented by Rogelio Singson, as well as the group composed of Monte Oro Grid Resources Corp. (60 percent) and China's State Grid Corp. (40 percent), represented by Walter Brown, have also pre-qualified.

PNOC-EDC shares . . .

From page B1

pine National Oil Co. (PNOC) raised P16.7 billion by selling new and existing shares equivalent to 36 percent of its share capital.

President Macapagal-Arroyo attended PNOC-EDC's stock launch, which was part of a government drive to privatize energy assets and achieve a balanced budget by 2008. The government stands to receive some P4.6 billion from the share sale.

Analysts said more companies were looking to list.

"There are a lot (of prospective IPOs) already lined up. We have around four or five that are already being prepared," said Ed Francisco, executive vice president of BDO Capital, a local investment bank, declining to give further details.

Broadcasting firm GMA Network Inc. is expected to list next year after postponing its IPO in 2006 after market turbulence.

The only other large listing this year was the P8-billion flotation of power producer First Gen Corp. in January.

CLSA Exchange Capital was the lead international underwriter for PNOC-EDC's listing. BDO Capital was one of four local underwriters for the offering.

Despite the lack of newcomers, the stock market hit 9-1/2-year highs recently and is up around 35 percent from a year ago due to investor confidence over improving state finances, solid earnings and relative political calm.

After years as the regional laggard, Philippine shares are beginning to appear on international radars.

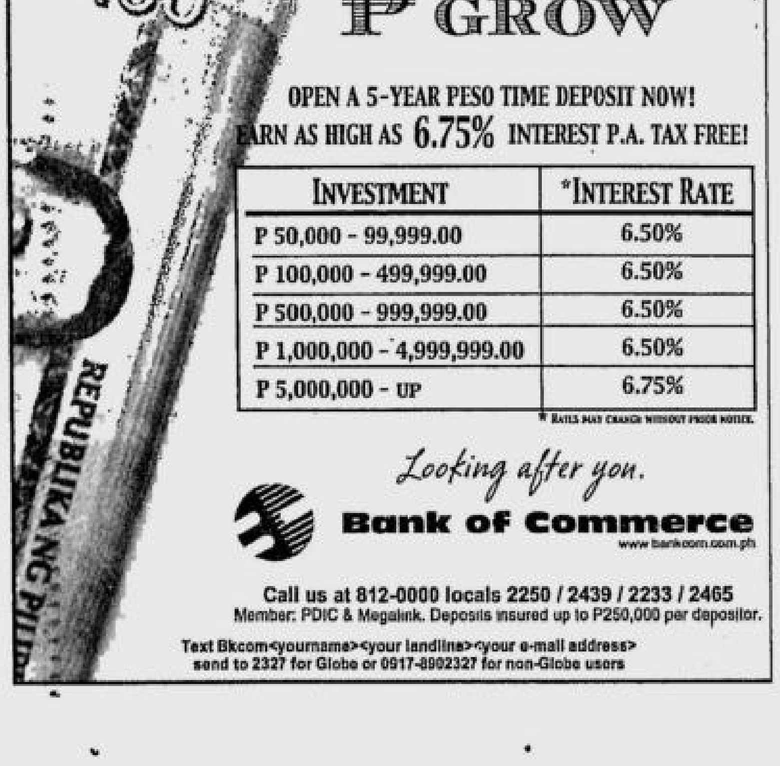
Net foreign buying in the stock market reached P51.63 billion in the first 10 months of the year, up 139 percent from a year ago. Around 70 percent of PNOC-EDC's offer was allocated to overseas institutions.

Analysts expect the index to rise around 25 percent next year despite the prospective of potentially disruptive congressional and local elections in May.

PNOC-EDC uses steam from hot underground water reservoirs to power electricity-generating turbines.

Half of the proceeds from PNOC-EDC's listing will be used to rehabilitate, expand and buy new equipment for plants developing geothermal power in the Philippines, the world's second-largest producer after the United States.

Reuters



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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 13, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7.5	7.7	7.5	7.5	101,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	44.5	44.5	43	44.5	2,073,900
Bank of the Phil. Islands	63	63.5	63	63	3,761,400
China Banking Corp.	700	700	700	700	800
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	300
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.47	0.49	0.47	0.47	5,960,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	51	51	50.5	50.5	1,240,200
Phil. Bank of Comm. A	51	51	51	51	1,200
Philippine National Bank	42	42	42	42	7,800
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	26	26.5	26	26.5	197,000
Security Bank Corp.	65.5	65.5	64.5	65	28,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	49.5	49.5	49.5	49.5	2,900
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	5.2	5.3	5.2	5.2	444,000
First Abacus Financial	0.51	0.64	0.51	0.64	100,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	2,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1640	1650	1640	1650	1,520
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.32	1.34	196,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	262.5	262.5	262.5	262.5	2,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2115	2120	2115	2115	1,870
Ivantage Corp.	1.5	1.52	1.48	1.5	190,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	4.5	4.55	4.15	4.55	1,227,687,000
First Gen Corp.	56	56	55	55	744,500
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	58.5	59.5	58.5	59.5	1,789,300
Manila Electric Co. A	50.5	54	50.5	54	1,007,400
Manila Electric Co. B	53.5	55	52	55	1,013,700
Manila Water Co., Inc.	9.6	9.9	9.6	9.9	1,465,000
Petron Corp.	4.1	4.15	4	4.05	7,618,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.27	1,820,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	189,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.6	3.8	3.6	3.8	15,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	21.5	21.5	21.25	21.25	23,200
Jollibee Foods Corp.	41	41	40.5	41	101,400
RFM Corp.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	207,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.65	2.75	2.65	2.65	118,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	40,000
San Miguel Corp. A	65	66	65	66	30,500
San Miguel Corp. B	70	71.5	70	71.5	41,000
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.04	2.08	2.02	2.06	2,093,000
Universal Robina Corp.	19.5	19.5	19.25	19.25	168,200
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE &ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.18	1.18	1.08	1.1	16,406,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	3.2	3.25	3.15	3.15	381,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	2.6	2.65	2.6	2.65	10,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.6	7.6	7.4	7.5	1,299,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	5.8	6.3	5.8	6.3	133,000
Republic Cement Corp.	4	4	4	4	100,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	4.8	5	4.65	5	14,349,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.71	0.72	0.7	0.71	18,170,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.175	0.185	0.175	0.18	5,190,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	10,000,000
Ayala Corp.	490	490	487.5	490	67,860
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	50,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	6.3	6.3	6.2	6.3	2,609,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	7.5	10.25	7.5	7.5	60,200
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.0625	0.06	0.06	11,900,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.85	2.85	2.85	2.85	2,530,000
APC Group Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.36	0.36	10,560,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	0.0095	13,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.93	0.94	0.93	0.93	1,490,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.88	2.1	1.88	2.08	51,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	80,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	8.5	8.6	8.5	8.6	7,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.16	2.22	2.12	2.22	10,065,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	6.2	6.3	6.1	6.2	5,864,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	40,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.94	1.96	1.94	1.96	110,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	9.2	9.2	9	9.1	3,032,000
Medco Holdings	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	430,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	4.35	4.35	4.25	4.3	34,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.6	1.64	412,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.195	0.205	0.195	0.2	2,650,000
Solid Group, Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.64	0.65	310,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.15	0.155	0.15	0.15	2,110,000
SM Investments Corp.	300	305	297.5	302.5	204,180
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.6	1.62	1.6	1.62	103,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.18	0.185	0.18	0.185	2,390,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	14.5	14.75	14.5	14.5	7,449,600
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	200,000
Belle Corp.	1.12	1.14	1.12	1.14	1,728,000
A Brown Co. Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.64	1.66	296,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.64	1.64	1.64	1.64	13,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	600,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	60,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.44	1.46	1.44	1.44	77,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	420,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.56	0.57	0.55	0.55	20,290,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	20,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.88	1.9	1.88	1.88	8,291,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.42	2.42	2.42	2.42	20,000
Interport Res.	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	7,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	5,000,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	75,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.51	0.54	0.51	0.51	4,760,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.28	2.34	2.24	2.26	9,074,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.36	0.38	0.36	0.38	790,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	180,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	16.25	16.5	16	16	1,309,300
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.67	0.69	0.66	0.69	59,140,000
SM Development Corp.	2.4	2.7	2.4	2.6	568,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	10	10	9.9	9.9	3,993,000
Uniwide Holdings, Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	500,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	21	21.25	21	21	58,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.68	1.9	1.68	1.84	49,371,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1250	1250	1240	1245	19,620
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	5.7	5.9	5.7	5.9	6,172,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co	2415	2450	2410	2430	145,420
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	3,430,000
Ionics Inc.	2.06	2.12	2.06	2.12	570,000
Ipvg Corp.	4.2	4.3	4.15	4.2	2,635,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	0.0575	700,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.22	1.22	42,000
Transpacific Broadband	5.3	5.4	4.8	5.1	728,000
Philweb Corp.	0.031	0.031	0.031	0.031	27,000,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.2	1.22	131,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	19	19	19	19	285,400
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.28	1.3	1.24	1.28	47,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.12	2.2	2.12	2.18	585,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.33	0.34	0.33	0.34	120,000
Philippine Racing Club	3	3.25	3	3.2	231,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.56	0.58	0.56	0.56	1,390,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	8.8	9	8.8	8.8	54,000
Ipeople Inc.	3.1	3.15	3.1	3.15	31,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.12	2.14	2.1	2.1	302,000
Paxys Inc.	18.25	18.25	17.75	17.75	11,100
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	665,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	6.3	6.4	6.3	6.4	245,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	50,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8.7	8.7	8.5	8.6	1,625,000
Benguet Corp. A	9	9.1	9	9.1	13,000
Benguet Corp. B	25	25	25	25	20,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.25	0.25	0.245	0.25	3,340,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.26	0.27	0.26	0.27	3,800,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.02	0.021	0.02	0.021	165,600,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.023	0.024	0.023	0.024	12,100,000
Omico Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	206,000,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.15	4.15	4.1	4.1	4,856,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	19	19	19	19	245,900
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.67	0.71	0.66	0.66	5,430,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.26	1.4	1.26	1.34	16,223,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	5,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10	10	10	10	28,000

CURRENCIES

December 13, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.752785	1.000000	49.5090
Japan	Yen	0.006447	0.008564	0.4240
United Kingdom	Pound	1.483815	1.971100	97.5872
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.096846	0.128650	6.3693
Switzerland	Franc	0.627530	0.833611	41.2712
Canada	Dollar	0.653630	0.868282	42.9878
Singapore	Dollar	0.489234	0.649899	32.1758
Australia	Dollar	0.590281	0.784129	38.8214
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.997838	2.653928	131.3933
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.200726	0.266645	13.2013
Brunei	Dollar	0.487650	0.647794	32.0716
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000083	0.000110	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.021350	0.028361	1.4041
UAE	Dirham	0.205085	0.272435	13.4880
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.328400	65.7678
Korea	Won	0.000816	0.001084	0.0537
China	Yuan**	0.096131	0.127701	6.3223
Argentina	Peso	0.246411	0.327332	16.2059
Brazil	Real	0.350851	0.466070	23.0747
Denmark	Kroner	0.134182	0.178247	8.8248
India	Rupee	0.016841	0.022371	1.1076
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.212772	0.282646	13.9935
Mexico	New Peso	0.069451	0.092259	4.5677
New Zealand	Dollar	0.519951	0.690703	34.1960
South Africa	Rand	0.107718	0.143092	7.0843
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023170	0.030779	1.5238

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—Dec. 12, 2006
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen
** Asian Time Closing Rate as of Dec. 12, 2006

PNOC-EDC listing . . .

From page B1

Risers outnumbered losers, 49 to 36 with 58 unchanged. Turnover totaled 5.49 billion shares valued at P1.8 billion, excluding block sales in PNOC-EDC worth P10.85 billion.

"Market activity was driven mainly by (PNOC-EDC), while other stocks were still in correction mode," said Nestor Aguila of DA Market Securities.

Top-traded PNOC-EDC jumped P1.35 to close at its day high of P4.55, against its offer price of P3.20.

PNOC-EDC's chief executive Paul Aquino said 74 percent of the shares issued at the initial public offering had been sold to foreign investors. The company sold 5.2 billion shares, which accounted for 36 percent of its share capital, and raised P16.7 billion.

AFP

Empowering MinTVET

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bian

GLOBALIZATION HAS MADE knowledge and skills even more important in determining the competitiveness and productivity of a country.

Those with low and out-moded skills will likely be left out of the radar screen of investors and businessmen.

Mindanao had 12.7 million people of working age as of June 2005, of which 7.7 million were considered gainfully employed, and 430,000 were unemployed.

The majority of the unemployed consist of seasonal workers and out-of-school youth.

It is worth noting that Mindanao's 94.7-percent employment rate exceeds the national average of 92.7 percent.

Among the regions, Region X remains the biggest employer, employing about 1.8 million workers (94.8 percent employment rate).

This is closely followed by Region XI at 1.6 million (94 percent employment rate) and Region XII at 1.4 million employed persons (93.8 percent employment rate). Unemployment, on the other

EMPOWERING/ B4

KAPATID AWARDS
2007

The Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) announces the opening of nominations for the *Kapatiran sa Industriya* (KAPATID) Awards 2007.

The award recognizes companies that exemplify good business practices in the areas of *industrial relations, productivity and quality, social accountability,* and *strategic visioning and partnering for business and job survival.*

Interested companies may get in touch with ECOP Research and Advocacy Department at tel. nos. 8904845, 8971329 or email research@ecop.org.ph.

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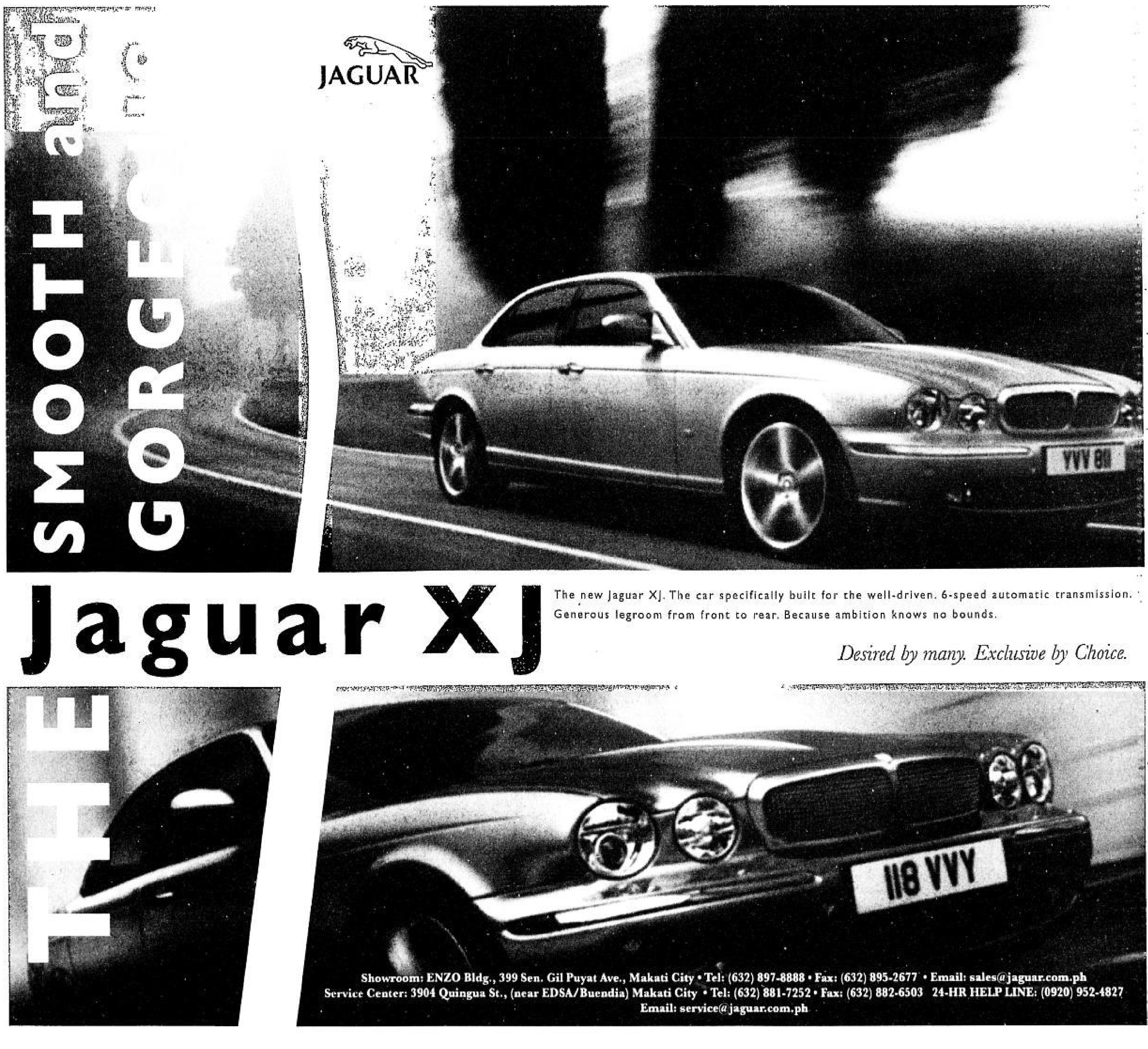

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Chinese group offers RP 15% of Philnico

Jinchuan also willing to invest $45M

By Christine A. Gaylican

A CONSORTIUM LED BY JINCHUAN Nonferrous Metals Corp., China's largest nickel refining company, has offered to invest an initial $45 million in debt-ridden Philippine Nickel Corp.

Jinchuan has also offered to give the government a 15-percent stake in Philnico if its plan to take over the company pushes through, said Mines and Geosciences Bureau chief Horacio Ramos in an interview with the INQUIRER.

Ramos said that the Finance Department's Privatization and Management Office was still studying the offer.

"Jinchuan, China's largest nickel mine and refinery producer, has even expressed willingness to take over Philnico," he added.

The rehabilitation of Philnico was among the $1.5 billion worth of projects signed during Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to the Philippines in June.

Based on the signed Memorandum of Understanding, Philnico's mining plant would be redeveloped into a large-scale nickel and cobalt mining and processing plant.

Once fully rehabilitated, the project is expected to export around $400 million worth of products and provide direct and indirect employment to 5,000 workers.

PNOC eyes bigger Petron stake

By Abigail L. Ho

PHILIPPINE NATIONAL OIL CO. IS LOOKING at increasing its equity in Petron Corp., anticipating a good return on its investment in the oil refiner in the coming years.

In a news briefing yesterday, PNOC officer in charge Pedro Aquino Jr. said discussions were very preliminary at this point, although Petron had appeared receptive to the idea of an additional equity infusion from PNOC.

"One big item that we'll really look into is our investment in Petron. We have had talks with Petron, but there's nothing concrete yet. Whatever plans that will be arrived at will have to be brought to the (PNOC) board for approval," he said. "It's either we will subscribe to existing shares or to a proportionate shareholding in the company."

He said PNOC would like to retain its 40-percent share of the company.

Saudi Aramco holds another 40 percent while the public owns 20 percent through the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Prior to these discussions, Aquino revealed that Petron had broached the idea of listing additional shares to raise new funds.

"They sought our approval to release 5 percent of our 40-percent stake. But (Petron) eventually got a short-term peso borrowing," he said.

The additional funds, he said, would be used to bankroll the company's refinery expansion efforts.

Should Petron revive that idea, he said PNOC would also "seriously" look into it.

PNOC's 40-percent stake in Petron is equivalent to some 3.75 billion shares in the company.

Right now, however, he said what was being discussed was the possibility of PNOC infusing additional equity into the country's largest oil refiner.

Empowering MinTVET

From page B3

hand, is estimated at 5.3 percent, which translates to 430,000 jobless Mindanaoans.

Region IX had the lowest unemployment rate at 3.2 percent followed by ARMM at 4.4 percent.

Mindanao TVET

Crucial to ensuring the quality and skills of Mindanao manpower are the over a thousand technical vocational and education training (TVET) schools and institutions all over Mindanao. These providers had organized themselves into Mindanao TVET (MinTVET), which is aimed at developing an empowered, productive and competitive Mindanao workforce that contributes to socio-economic development.

Members of the association represent vocational and technical institutions from Regions IX, X, XI, XII and the Caraga Region.

Recently, MinTVET and the Philippine Australia Human Resource Development Facility (PAHRDF) forged an agreement where the latter will provide access to training and capacity building to effectively managing the schools.

About 80 percent of TVET schools are small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and mostly family-owned and managed enterprises.

Their sole source of income is training and education.

I am a TVET school owner myself, having been in the business for over 15 years, and I had seen many struggling TVET school operators trying to make both ends meet.

This ultimately results in a poor curriculum, unqualified faculty members, lack of updated facilities, weak market and industry linkages that hamper the delivery of quality training.

Partnering with PAHRDF

The Philippines Australia Human Resource Development Facility (PAHRDF) is an AusAID funded development initiative, which aims to support government efforts to promote sustainable and equitable development through planned capacity building programs for key government and private sector institutions.

The facility has officially covered 59 public and private sector institutions in the Philippines since August 2004.

Some of the institutions in Mindanao being supported by PAHRDF in 2006-2007 are: In the public sector—Provincial Government of Agusan del Sur, Provincial Government of Surigao del Norte, Provincial Government of Misamis Occidental, Department of Trade and Industry, Mindanao Economic Development Council, Mindanao State University; in the private sector—Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mindanao TVET Association, Jamiat-ul Philippine Al-Islamiah.

In the arena of technical training and education, the Australian assistance focused on improving the quality of and access to basic education and TVET: And providing institutional capacity building programs for selected government and private sector institutions.

Strenthening TVET

Milalin Javellana, PAHRDF Senior Training Adviser who works closely with MinTVET, said that the facility design provides for two main modes of Human resource (HR) delivery: Long-term training and short-term HR activities.

There were two identified major HR areas to be addressed on a short term basis.

The Effective Enterprise-Based School Management is a training system designed for MinTVET Board members and secretariat capacity building and the development of management resource manual for school operators and administrators and TVET industry partnership/development.

The second to be addressed is the development of a MinTVET comprehensive web base and database of its members, where information on courses and labor market demands and trends will be made available on the Internet.

Long-term training activity would include provision of quality standards with monitoring at the institutional level and teaching staff, as well as developing a curriculum that is relevant to the skills requirements of the industry.

Ultimately, the partnership would help put TVET schools in Mindanao at par with the world's standards in the school management and curriculum where training will focus on developing highly skilled Mindanaons that will be government's partner in seizing new opportunities created by globalization.

(Joji Ilagan Bian is a strong advocate for Mindanao; Chair, Mindanaworld Foundation Inc; Mindanao TVET; Mindanao Rep, Export Development Council ; Chair, Joji Ilagan Foundation ; Former Chair of the Mindanao Business Council. Email comments to jojibian2@yahoo.com)

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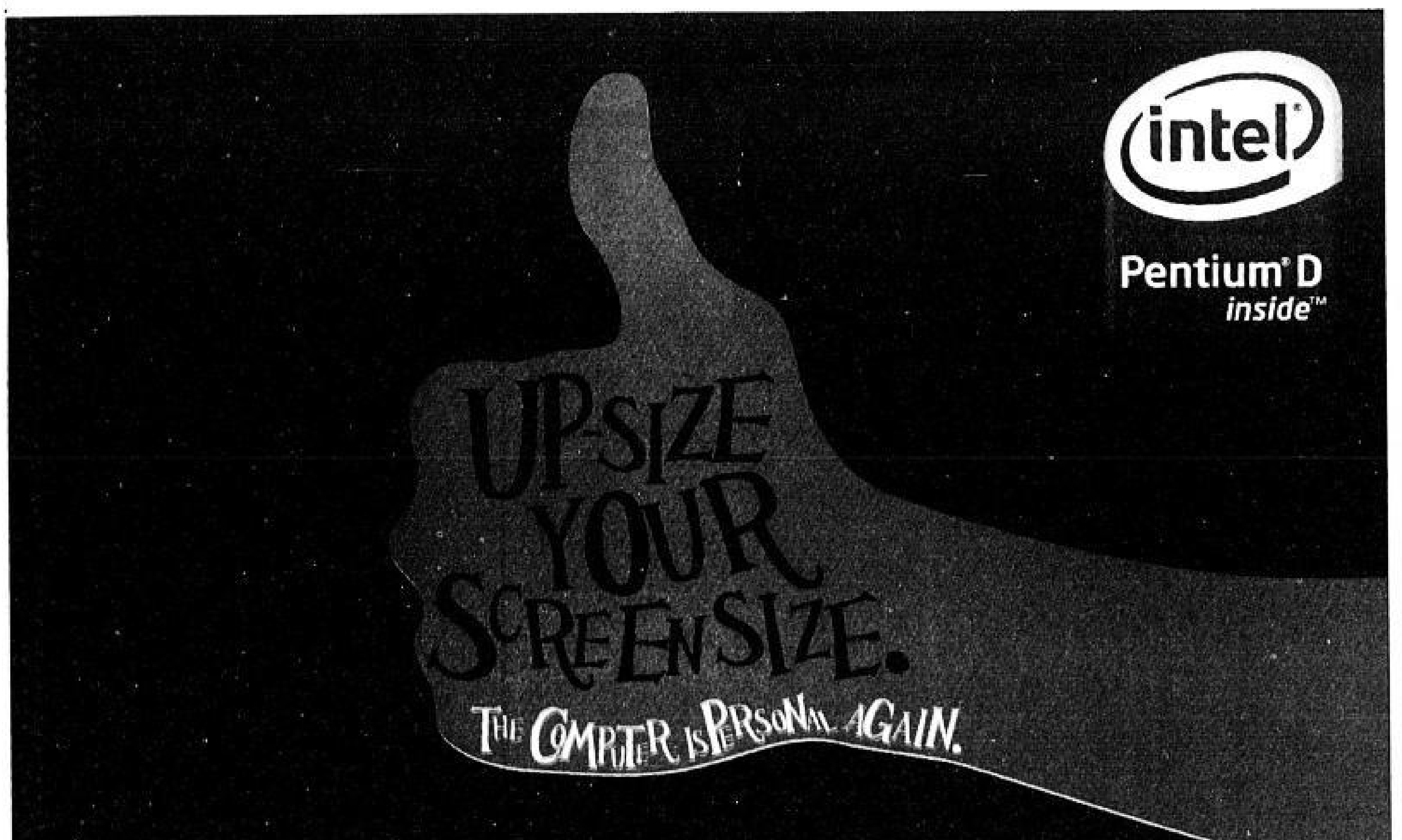

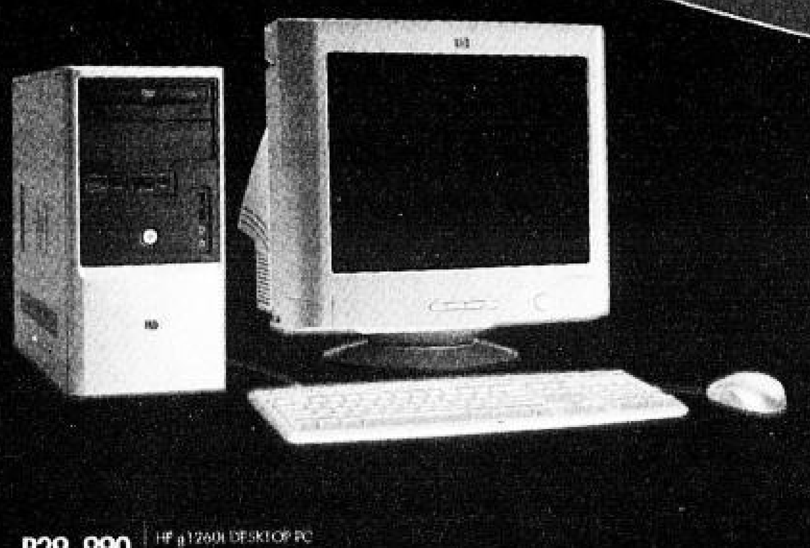

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Republic of the Philippines

COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS

Manila

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES AND PERIODS ON PROHIBITED ACTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONDUCT OF THE DECEMBER 30, 2006, PLEBISCITES TO RATIFY THE CREATION OF THE FOLLOWING: (A) MUNICIPALITIES OF PANDAG AND MANGUNDADATU OUT OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF BULUAN, MAGUINDANAO, PURSUANT TO MMAA NOS. 203 and 204; (B) MUNICIPALITY OF DATU ANGGAL MIDTIMBANG OUT OF THE MUNICIPALITIES OF TALAYAN AND TALITAY, MAGUINDANAO, PURSUANT TO MMAA NO. 206; (C) MUNICIPALITY OF NORTH KABUNTALAN OUT OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF KABUNTALAN, PROVINCE OF SHARIFF KABUNSUAN, PURSUANT TO MMAA NO. 205; and (D) BARANGAY GADUNGAN PEDPANDARAN OUT OF BARANGAY LITAYEN, MUNICIPALITY OF PARANG, PROVINCE OF SHARIFF KABUNSUAN, PURSUANT TO MMAA NO. 82.

x----------------------------x

ABALOS, Benjamin S.	Chairman
BORRA, Resurreccion Z.	Commissioner
TUASON, Jr. Florentino A.	Commissioner
BRAWNER, Romeo A.	Commissioner
SARMIENTO, Rene V.	Commissioner
FERRER, Nicodemo T.	Commissioner

Promulgated : 11 December 2006

RESOLUTION NO. 7780

Pursuant to the powers vested in it by the Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code, Republic Act No. 7160, Republic Act No. 9054, Republic Act No. 6734, Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 25, and other election laws, the Commission on Elections RESOLVED to adopt, as it hereby RESOLVES to adopt, the following Calendar of Activities and Periods on Prohibited Acts for the conduct of the December 30, 2006 plebiscites to ratify the creation of the following: (a) Municipalities of Pandag and Mangudadatu out of the mother Municipality of Buluan, Province of Maguindanao, pursuant to MMAA Nos. 203 and 204; (b)Municipality of Datu Anggal Midtimbang out of the Municipalities of Talayan and Talitay, Province of Maguindanao, pursuant to MMAA No. 206, and (c) Municipality of North Kabuntalan out of the mother municipality of Kabuntalan, Province of Shariff Kabunsuan, pursuant to MMAA No. 205; and (d) Barangay Gadunganpedpandaran out of Barangay Litayen, Parang, Maguindanao, pursuant to MMAA No. 82, to wit :

DATE/PERIOD	PLEBISCITE ACTIVITIES	PROHIBITED ACTS COVERED/INVOLVED
December 14, 2006 (THU) to January 5, 2007 (FRI)	PLEBISCITE PERIOD	1. Bearing, carrying or transporting firearms or other deadly weapons in public places, including any building, street, park, private vehicle or public conveyance, even if licensed to possess or carry the same, unless authorized in writing by the Commission. (Sec. 261 (p) (q) (s) OEC as amended by Sec. 32 R.A. No. 7166; 2. Suspension of elective local officials.(Sec. 261 (x) OEC); 3. Transfer of officers and employees in the Civil Service. (Sec. 261 (h) OEC); 4. Organization or maintenance of reaction forces, strike forces or other similar forces. (Sec. 261 (u) OEC).
December 14, 2006 (THU) to December 30, 2006 (SAT)		1. Appointment or hiring of new employees. Sec. 261(g) OEC); 2. Creation or filling up of new positions. (Sec. 261 (g) OEC); 3. Promotion or giving of salary increases, remuneration or privilege. (Sec. 261 (g) OEC); 4. Construction of public works, delivery of materials for public works and issuance of treasury warrants or similar devices for a future undertaking chargeable against public funds. (Sec. 261 (w) OEC); 5. Releases, disbursements or expenditures of public works and social services and development. (Sec. 261 (v) OEC); 6. Appointment or use of special policemen, special/confidential agents or the like. (Sec. 261 (m) OEC); 7. Use of armored land, water or aircraft. (Sec. 261 (r) OEC); 8. Wearing of uniforms and bearing of arms. (Sec. 261 (s) OEC).
December 14, 2006 (THU) to December 28, 2006	CAMPAIGN PERIOD	
December 20, 2006 (WED)	Submission to Comelec of complete list of all special policemen, special/ confidential agents or persons performing similar functions in the employ of barangay chairman, municipal mayor or any appointing authority.	
December 20, 2006 (WED)	Last day for appointment of members of Plebiscite Committees	
December 22, 2006 (FRI) to December 30, 2006 (SAT)	Posting of the Certified List of Voters as of the August 8, 2005 ARMM elections,	
December 29, 2006 (FRI)	Inspection of Polling Places	1. Liquor Ban (starting 12 midnight) Selling, furnishing, offering, buying, serving, or taking intoxicating liquor, etc. (Sec. 261 (dd), (1), OEC). 2. Campaigning (Sec. 3, OEC).
December 30, 2006 (SAT)	PLEBISCITE DAY	1. Cockfighting and other forms of gambling, holding fairs, boxing and/ or any other similar sports. (Sec. 261 (dd) OEC) 2. Giving, accepting free transportation, food, drinks, and things of value (Sec. 89, OEC). 3. Selling, furnishing, offering, buying, serving, or taking intoxicating liquor, etc. (Sec. 261 (dd), (1), OEC). 4. Opening of booths or stalls for the sale of merchandise, refreshment, etc. within 30 meters radius from polling place (Sec. 261 (dd) (2) OEC). 5. 2. Campaigning (Sec. 3, OEC).
January 5, 2007 (Fri)	LAST DAY OF PLEBISCITE PERIOD	

Let this Resolution be published by the Education and Information Department (EID) in a newspaper of general circulation, and in a newspaper with local circulation in the Provinces of Maguindanao and Shariff Kabunsuan. The Deputy Executive Director for Operations shall furnish the Regional Election Director of ARMM, the Provincial Election Supervisors of Maguindanao and Shariff Kabunsuan and the Election Officers of the Municipalities of Buluan, Talayan and Talitay, Province of Maguindano and of the Municipalities of Kabuntalan and Parang, Province of Shariff Kabunsuan, the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government, the Secretary of the Department of Education, the Provincial Governors of Maguindanao and Shariff Kabunsuan, the Municipal Treasurers and the DepEd Supervisors of the Municipalities of Buluan, Talayan and Talitay of Maguindanao, and of the Municipalities of Kabuntalan and Parang, Province of Shariff Kabunsuan, with a copy of this Resolution.

The Provincial Election Supervisors of Maguindanao and Shariff Kabunsuan, shall give this Resolution the widest publication in their provinces.

This Resolution shall take effect upon its publication.

SO ORDERED.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS
Chairman

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON, JR.
Commissioner

On Official Business
ROMEO A. BRAWNER
Commissioner

RENE V. SARMIENTO
Commissioner

NICODEMO T. FERRER
Commissioner

Republic of the Philippines

COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS

Manila

RULES AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE CONDUCT OF THE DECEMBER 30, 2006 PLEBISCITES TO RATIFY THE CREATION OF THE FOLLOWING: (A) MUNICIPALITIES OF PANDAG AND MANGUDADATU OUT OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF BULUAN, PROVINCE OF MAGUINDANAO, PURSUANT TO MMAA NOS. 203 AND 204; (B) MUNICIPALITY OF DATU ANGGAL MIDTIMBANG OUT OF THE MUNICIPALITIES OF TALAYAN AND TALITAY, PROVINCE OF MAGUINDANAO, PURSUANT TO MMAA NO. 206; (C) MUNICIPALITY OF NORTH KABUNTALAN OUT OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF KABUNTALAN, PROVINCE OF SHARIFF KABUNSUAN, PURSUANT TO MMAA NO. 205; and (D) BARANGAY GADUNGANPEDPANDARAN OUT OF BARANGAY LITAYEN, MUNICIPALITY OF PARANG, PROVINCE OF SHARIFF KABUNSUAN, PURSUANT TO MMAA NO. 82.

x----------------------------x

ABALOS, Benjamin S.	Chairman
BORRA, Resurreccion Z.	Commissioner
TUASON, Jr. Florentino A.	Commissioner
BRAWNER, Romeo A.	Commissioner
SARMIENTO, Rene V.	Commissioner
FERRER, Nicodemo T.	Commissioner

Promulgated : 11 December 2006

RESOLUTION NO. 7781

The Commission on Elections, by virtue of the powers conferred upon it by the Constitution, the Omnibus Election Code, the Local Government Code (Republic Act No. 7160), Republic Act 6734, Republic Act No. 9054, Mindanao Muslim Autonomy Act No. 25, and other election laws, **RESOLVED** to promulgate, as it hereby **RESOLVES** to promulgate, the rules and regulations to govern the conduct of the December 30, 2006 plebiscites, to ratify the creation of the following political units:

- Municipalities of Pandag and Mangudadato to be taken from the Municipality of Buluan, Maguindanao, pursuant to Muslim Mindanao Autonomy (MMAA) Nos. 203 and 204;
- Municipality of Datu Anggal Midtimbang to be taken from the Municipalities of Talayan and Talitay, Maguindanao, pursuant to MMA Act No. 206;
- Municipaity of North Kabuntalan to be taken from the Municipality of Kabuntalan, Shariff Kabunsuan, pursuant to MMA Act No. 205; and
- Barangay Gadunganpedpandaran to be taken from Barangay Litayen, Parang, Shariff Kabunsuan, pursuant to MMA Act No. 82.

SEC. 1. Supervision and control. – The Commission on Elections shall have direct control and supervision over the conduct of the plebiscites.

SEC. 2. Expenses and election forms and paraphernalia. – The expenses in holding the plebiscites, which shall include the printing of official ballots, plebiscite returns and other forms; the procurement of supplies and paraphernalia; the per diems of the members of the Plebiscite Committees; the overtime compensation of the Plebiscite Boards of Canvassers and their support staff and other operational and incidental expenses, includings costs of publication of resolutions and information materials, shall be borne by the Municipalities of Buluan, Talayan, Talitay, Province of Maguindanao, and of Kabuntalan and Parang, Province of Shariff Kabunsuan. For this purpose, the Deputy Executive Director for Operations shall require the Municipal Election Officers of Buluan, Talayan, Talitay, Kabuntalan and Parang, to prepare the respective plebiscite budgetary requirements of their office; submit the budget for the holding of the plebiscite; and require the proponent to immediately appropriate and remit the necessary amount.

The Committees on Allocation, Printing, Reception and Verification, Packing and Shipping, the Administrative Services Department and the Information Techmology Department shall prepare their itemized administrative, operational and technical budgetary needs, which shall be reviewed and consolidated by the ODEDO, which shall submit the same to the Commission En Banc.

SEC. 3. Posting of Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Acts (MMAAs). At least ten (10) days prior to the day of the plebiscite, the Election Officers (EOs) of Kabuntalan, Buluan, Talayan, Talitay and Parang, shall cause the posting of copies of Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act pertaining to their respective municipalities in all the polling places of their respective municipalities, namely:

MMAA No. 203, entitled: "An Act Creating the Municipality of Pandag in the Province of Maguindanao, Providing Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes";

MMAA No. 204, entitled: "An Act Creating the Municipality of Mangudadatu in the Province of Maguindanao, Providing Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes";

MMAA No. 205, entitled: "An Act Creating the Municipality of Northern Kabuntalan in the Province of Shariff Kabunsuan, Providing Funds Therefor, and for Other purposes";

MMAA No. 206, entitled: "An Act Creating the Municipality of Datu Anggal Midtimbang in the Province of Maguindanao, Providing Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes";

MMAA No. 82, entitled: "An Act Creating Barangay Gadunganpedpandaran in the Municipality of Parang, Province of Maguindanao, and for Other Purposes";

SEC. 4. Information campaign. – An objective information campaign shall be conducted in the Municipalities of Buluan, Talayan, and Talitay, Maguindanao, and the Municipality of Kabuntalan and of Barangay Litayen, Municipality of Parang, Province of Shariff Kabunsuan, to commence on December 14, 2006 up to December 28, 2006. During this period, civic, professional, religious, business, youth and any other similar organizations may hold symposia, public rallies or meetings to enlighten the voters of the Municipalities of Buluan, Talayan, and Talitay, Maguindanao, and of the Municipality of Kabuntalan and pf Barangay Litayen, Municipality of Parang, Shariff Kabunsuan, on the plebiscite issues, and to campaign for or against the ratification of MMAAs No. 203, 204, 205, 206, and 82 as the case maybe Constructive discussions and debates shall be encouraged and the voters assured of the freedom to voice their opinion regarding the issues, advantages or disadvantages thereof.

The Election Officers of Buluan, Talayan, Talitay, Kabuntalan and Parang, in coordination with the local government officials, mass media, NGOs and religious groups shall convene barangay assemblies or "pulong-pulongs" for such constructive discussions and debates.

SEC. 5. Date of plebiscite and voting hours. – The plebiscite shall be held on December 30, 2006 (Saturday). The voting shall start at seven o'clock in the morning and end at three o'clock in the afternoon.

SEC. 6. Area of coverage. – The plebiscite shall be held in the Municipalities of Buluan, Talayan, and Talitay, Maguindanao, and of the Municipality of Kabuntalan and of Barangay

SEC. 7. Who may vote. – All qualified voters of the Municipalities of Buluan, Talayan, and Talitay, Maguindanao, and of the Municipality of Kabuntalan and of Barangay Litayen, Municipality of Parang, Shariff Kabunsuan, of duly registered as such as of the August 8, 2005 ARMM Elections, including those whose applications for registration were approved by the Election Registration Board during the October 16, 2004 ERB hearing and who will be at least 18 years old on December 30, 2006, are entitled to vote in the plebiscite for the ratification of the creation of the municipalities of Pandag, Mangudadatu, Datu Anggal Midtimbang, Northern Kabuntalan and Barangay Gadunganpedpandaran.

The Election Officers (EOs) of Buluan, Talayan, Talitay , Kabuntalan and Parang, shall prepare the Precinct Level List of Voters (PCVL) for use in the plebiscite in accordance with Section 12 hereof.

SEC. 8. Plebiscite Committee; Composition; Compensation; Duties and Functions – The voting and counting of votes shall be conducted in each polling place by a Plebiscite Committee (Committee) composed of a Chairman, a Poll Clerk and a Third Member who shall all be public school teachers, to be appointed by the Commission through the EOs of Buluan, Talayan and Talitay, Maguindanao; and Kabuntalan and Parang, Shariff Kabunsuan .

Each member of the Committee shall be entitled to a per diem of One Thousand Pesos (PhP 1,000,00) for services rendered on the day of the plebiscite.

The Committee shall have the following powers and duties:

(a) Supervise and conduct the voting in the polling place on December 30, 2006;
(b) Count the votes and thereafter prepare the plebiscite returns and other required documents/reports, and distribute the same as herein provided;
(c) Furnish watchers Certificate of Votes upon request;
(d) Return the book/s of voters to the EO, through the principal of the polling centers, and deliver the other plebiscite paraphernalia to their respective custodians for safekeeping not later than January 3, 2006;
(e) Act as deputies of the Commission in the supervision and control of the plebiscite in the polling places wherein they are assigned to ensure the holding of free, orderly, honest, peaceful and credible plebiscite;
(f) Maintain order within the polling place and its premises, to keep access thereto open and unobstructed, and to enforce obedience to its lawful orders.

If any person shall refuse to obey lawful orders of the Committee or shall conduct himself in a disorderly manner in its presence or within its hearing thereby interrupting or disturbing its proceedings, the Committee may issue an order in writing directing any peace officer to take such person into custody until the adjournment of the meeting, but such order shall not be executed as to prevent the person so taken into custody from exercising his right to vote. Such order shall be executed by any peace officer to whom it may be delivered, but if none is present, by any other person deputized by the Committee in writing; and

(g) Perform such other functions/duties as may be prescribed by the Commission.

SEC. 9. Disqualifications. – (a) No person shall serve as chairman or member of the Committee if he is related within the fourth civil degree of consanguinity or by affinity to any member of the same Committee.

(b) No member of the Committee shall engage, directly or indirectly, in any partisan political activity or take part in the plebiscite, except to discharge his duties as such, and to vote, provided he is a registered voter of the municipality.

Sec. 10. Precincts and polling places. - For purposes of the December 30, 2006 Plebiscite, the precincts established as of the August 8, 2005 ARMM Elections shall be adopted, subject to the provisions of Section 11 hereof.

The location of polling places designated in the August 8, 2005 ARMM Elections shall be maintained, with such changes as the Commission may authorize, after notice and hearing to the interested parties in the political unit/s affected: ***Provided***, that no location of polling place shall be changed within fifteen (15) days immediately preceding the day of the plebiscite except when it is destroyed or it cannot be used.

SEC. 11. Clustering of Precincts. – To obviate problems on insufficiency of Plebiscite Committees and polling places, the EOs shall group (cluster) precincts in accordance with the following guidelines:

(a) The number of precincts in a group (cluster) shall not be more than two (2);
(b) The aggregate number of voters in a group shall not exceed four hundred (400);
(c) The precincts in a group shall belong to the same territory, same polling center and same barangay;
(d) The individual precinct numbers and list of voters of the precincts in a group shall be maintained separately, and in no case shall they be combined;
(e) The ballots for the precincts in a group shall be deposited in one ballot box; and
(f) One plebiscite Committee shall be assigned for each group of precinct or precinct cluster.

SEC. 12. Precinct Level Computerized Voters List (PCVL) and Election Day Computerized Voters List (EDCVL) – The EOs shall print four (4) copies of the PCVL which shall be certified by the Election Registration Board (ERB), for distribution as follows:

(a) One copy for posting at the Office of the EO;
(b) One copy for posting at the municipal bulletin board;
(c) One copy for posting on plebiscite day at the door at the polling place; and
(d) One copy for the Provincial File, Offices of the Provincial Election Supervisor of Maguindanao and Shariff Kabunsuan, as the case may be.

The Information Technology Department shall print two (2) copies of the EDCVL for distribution as follows:

(a) One copy for use by the Plebiscite Committee on plebiscite day; and
(b) One copy for the National Central File, Election Records and Statistics Department.

SEC. 13. Distribution of Plebiscite Forms and Supplies. – The Municipal Treasurers shall, in coordination with the EOs concerned, distribute the plebiscite forms and supplies to the Committees. The EO or his/her authorized representatives shall release the Books of Voters and the PCVL to the School Principals concerned who shall in turn release them to the Committees.

SEC. 14. Official ballots. – The official ballots shall be distributed at the ratio of one ballot per voter. The official ballots to be used in the plebiscites shall bear the following heading:

For the Municipality of Buluan, Maguindanao:

"OFFICIAL BALLOT"; "PLEBISCITE"; "DECEMBER 30, 2006"; "MUNICIPALITY OF BULUAN, MAGUINDANAO"; and underneath the following instructions: **"Fill out this ballot secretly inside the booth. Do not put any distinctive mark on any part of this ballot."**

The following question shall be provided in the official ballots:

"DO YOU APPROVE OF THE CREATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF PANDAG IN MAGUINDANAO, INTO A DISTINCT AND INDEPENDENT MUNICIPALITY TO INCLUDE THE BARANGAYS OF MALANGIT, PANDAG, LOWER DILAG, UPPER DILAG, KAYAGA, KAYUPO, KABULING AND LEPAK IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BULUAN, MAGUINDANAO, PURSUANT TO MMA ACT NO. 203?" ☐

"DO YOU APPROVE OF THE CREATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF MANGUDADATU IN MAGUINDANAO, INTO A DISTINCT AND INDEPENDENT MUNICIPALITY TO INCLUDE THE BARANGAYS OF TALITAY, TUMBAO, PANAPAN, PAITAN, TINAMBULAN, LUAYAN, TENOK, KAKAL AND SAIDAN IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BULUAN, MAGUINDANAO, PURSUANT TO MMA ACT NO. 204?" ☐

For the Municipality of Talayan, Maguindanao:

"OFFICIAL BALLOT"; "PLEBISCITE"; "DECEMBER 30, 2006"; "MUNICIPALITY OF TALAYAN, MAGUINDANAO"; and underneath the following instructions: **"Fill out this ballot secretly inside the booth. Do not put any distinctive mark on any part of this ballot."**

The following question shall be provided in the official ballots:

"DO YOU APPROVE OF THE CREATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF DATU ANGGAL MIDTIMBANG IN MAGUINDANAO, INTO A DISTINCT AND INDEPENDENT MUNICIPALITY TO INCLUDE THE BARANGAYS OF MIDTIMBANG, BRAR AND TULUNAN IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TALAYAN, MAGUINDANAO, PURSUANT TO MMA ACT NO. 206?" ☐

For the Municipality of Talitay, Maguindanao:

"OFFICIAL BALLOT"; "PLEBISCITE"; "DECEMBER 30, 2006"; "MUNICIPALITY OF TALITAY, MAGUINDANAO"; and underneath the following instructions: **"Fill out this ballot secretly inside the booth. Do not put any distinctive mark on any part of this ballot."**

The following question shall be provided in the official ballots:

"DO YOU APPROVE OF THE CREATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF DATU ANGGAL MIDTIMBANG IN MAGUINDANAO, INTO A DISTINCT AND INDEPENDENT MUNICIPALITY TO INCLUDE THE BARANGAYS OF NUNANGAN, TUGAL, ADAON AND MAPAYAG IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TALITAY, MAGUINDANAO, PURSUANT TO MMA ACT NO. 206?" ☐

For the Municipality of Kabuntalan, Shariff Kabunsuan:

"OFFICIAL BALLOT"; "PLEBISCITE"; "DECEMBER 30, 2006"; "MUNICIPALITY OF KABUNTALAN, SHARIFF KABUNSUAN"; and underneath the following instructions: **"Fill out this ballot secretly inside the booth. Do not put any distinctive mark on any part of this ballot."**

The following question shall be provided in the official ballots:

"DO YOU APPROVE OF THE CREATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF NORTHERN KABUNTALAN IN SHARIFF KABUNSUAN, INTO A DISTINCT AND INDEPENDENT MUNICIPALITY TO INCLUDE THE BARANGAYS OF BALONG, DAMATOG, GAYONGA, GUIAWA, INDATUAN, KAPIMPILAN, PAULINO LABIO, LIBUNGAN, MONTAY, SABAKEN AND TUMAGUINTING IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KABUNTALAN, SHARIFF KABUNSUAN, PURSUANT TO MMA ACT NO. 205?" ☐

For Barangay Litayen, Municipality of Parang, Shariff Kabunsuan:

"OFFICIAL BALLOT"; "PLEBISCITE"; "DECEMBER 30, 2006"; "BARANGAY LITAYEN, MUNICIPALITY OF PARANG, SHARIFF KABUNSUAN"; and underneath the following instructions: **"Fill out this ballot secretly inside the booth. Do not put any distinctive mark on any part of this ballot."**

The following question shall be provided in the official ballots:

"DO YOU APPROVE OF THE CREATION OF BARANGAY GADUNGANPEDPANDARAN, INTO A DISTINCT AND INDEPENDENT BARANGAY TO BE TAKEN FROM BARANGAY LITAYEN IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PARANG, PROVINCE OF SHARIFF KABUNSUAN, PURSUANT TO MMA ACT NO. 82?" ☐

SEC. 15. Preliminaries to the Counting of Votes. - (a) The Committee shall clear the table of all unnecessary writing paraphernalia.

(b) The Committee shall open the ballot box, take out the ballots from the compartment for valid ballots and, without unfolding or exposing their contents, examine them using the following guidelines:

1. Ballots folded together – The Committee shall ascertain that each fold consists of a single ballot. If in the course of the examination, ballots are found folded together before they were deposited in the ballot box, they shall be placed in an envelope for excess ballots.
2. Excess ballots - The Committee shall then count the ballots and compare the number of ballots with the number of voters who actually voted. If there are excess ballots, follow the procedures provided for in Section 16 (b) hereof.
3. Ballots with detachable coupons – In case ballots with undetached coupons are found in the ballot box, the coupon shall be detached and deposited in the compartment for spoiled ballots, and the ballots shall be included in the pile of valid ballots.
4. Ballots with the word "spoiled" - If ballots with the word "spoiled" should be found, they shall be placed in the compartment for spoiled ballots.

   The ballots deposited in the compartment for spoiled ballots shall be presumed to be spoiled ballots, whether or not they contain such notation; but if the Committee should find that during the voting any valid ballot was erroneously deposited in this compartment, or if any ballot separated as excess or marked had been erroneously deposited therein, the Committee shall open said compartment after the voting and before the counting of votes for the sole purpose of drawing out the ballots erroneously deposited therein. It shall then prepare and sign a statement of such fact and lock the ballot box with its three keys immediately thereafter. The valid ballots so withdrawn shall be mixed with the other valid ballots, and the excess or marked ballots shall be placed in their proper envelopes which shall for such purposes be opened and again labeled, sealed, signed and kept as hereinafter provided.

(c) Excess and spoiled ballots shall not be read in the counting of votes.

(d) The Poll Clerk shall take hold of the plebiscite returns and the Third Member shall tack the tally board on the blackboard or any available space within the plain view of the Committee, watchers and the public.

SEC. 16. Manner of Counting of Votes. – The counting of votes shall be public without interruption or delay until completed and shall proceed as follows:

a. The Committee shall open the ballot box, take out the ballots and without unfolding them or exposing their contents except so far as to ascertain that each ballot is single, compare the number of ballots in the ballot box with the number of voters who actually voted as recorded in the Minutes of Voting and Counting.

b. If there are more ballots found than there are voters who actually voted, all the ballots shall be returned inside the ballot box and thoroughly mixed therein. The Poll Clerk, without seeing the ballots and with his back to the ballot box, shall publicly draw out as many ballots as may be equal to the excess, and without unfolding them, place them in an envelope which shall be marked "excess ballots" and shall be sealed and signed by the Committee. If there are no excess or the excess has been taken out, the Committee shall form separate piles of 100 ballots each which shall be held together by rubber band.

c. The Chairman shall take the ballots of the first pile and read the ballots one by one, while the Poll Clerk and Third Member shall simultaneously record on the plebiscite returns and tally board, respectively, each vote as it is read by the Chairman.

   Each vote shall be recorded by a vertical line, except every fifth vote, which shall be recorded by a diagonal line crossing the previous four vertical lines.

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After finishing the first pile, the Committee shall count the tallies for the Affirmative and Negative votes and record the sub-totals in the column immediately after the last tara recorded in the plebiscite returns and tally board, respectively.

The Poll Clerk and the Third Member shall compare the tallies reflected in the election returns and tally board.

In case of discrepancy, a recount shall be made. The ballots shall again be grouped together as before the reading.

d. Thereafter, the same procedures shall be followed for the second and subsequent piles of ballots.

e. After all the ballots for the precinct have been counted, the Committee shall:
  1. Sum up the sub-totals of recorded Affirmative and Negative Votes and enter the grand total in words and in figures in the plebiscite returns and tally board;
  2. See to it that the entries in the first copy of the plebiscite returns are clearly impressed and reflected properly in the other two (2) copies;
  3. Sign and affix their thumb marks on the certification portion printed at the bottom of the plebiscite returns and tally board; and
  4. Place the counted ballots in an envelope provided for the purpose, close the envelope with a serially numbered paper seal, sign and deposit the same in the compartment for valid ballots. The accomplished tally board, certified by the Committee, shall also be deposited in the compartment for valid ballots.

SEC. 17. Appreciation of Ballots. – The provisions of SEC. 211 of the Omnibus Election Code whenever applicable, shall govern the appreciation of ballots. Any question on the appreciation of ballots shall be decided by a majority vote of the Committee.

No watcher or any other person inside the polling place shall be allowed to participate in the appreciation of ballots. However, any watcher may file a protest, which shall be recorded in the Minutes.

SEC. 18. Plebiscite Returns and Distribution of Copies Thereof. – Plebiscite returns shall be prepared in three (3) copies. All the members of the Committee shall sign the certification printed at the bottom of the plebiscite returns and affix their respective thumb marks on the space provided.

Upon completion of the plebiscite returns, each copy shall be placed in a separate envelope provided for the purpose, and be immediately distributed under proper receipt, as follows:

(1) The first copy to the Municipal Plebiscite Board of Canvassers;
(2) The second copy to the Election Records and Statistics Department of the Commission in Manila; and
(3) The third copy shall be deposited inside the ballot box.

SEC. 19. Announcement of Results. – Upon completion of the plebiscite returns, the Chairman of the Committee shall orally and publicly announce the total number of Affirmative and Negative Votes cast and counted in the precinct.

SEC. 20. Alterations and Corrections of Plebiscite Returns. – Any correction or alteration made in the plebiscite returns by the Committee before the announcement of the results of the plebiscite in the polling place shall be duly initialed by all the members thereof.

After the announcement of the results of the plebiscite, the Committee shall not make any alteration or amendment in any of the copies of the returns, unless authorized by the Commission.

SEC. 21. Certificates of Votes. – Before leaving the precinct, the Committee shall issue a Certificate of Votes to the watchers upon the latter's request.

SEC. 22. Delivery of the Ballot Boxes, and Other Supplies and Documents, Preservation of Voting Records, Ballot Boxes and their Keys, and their Disposition. – The provisions of Section 217, 218 and 219 of the Omnibus Election Code on delivery of ballot boxes, keys and election supplies and documents, preservation of the voting records and ballot boxes and their keys, and disposition of their contents shall apply to the plebiscite governed by this Resolution.

SEC. 23. Municipal Plebiscite Board of Canvassers. - There shall each be one (1) Municipal Plebiscite Board of Canvassers (MPBC) for Buluan, Talayan and Talitay, Maguindanao; and Kabuntalan and Parang, Shrill Kabusuan, which shall canvass the plebiscite returns submitted by their respective Plebiscite Committees. These MPBCs shall be composed of the incumbent Municipal Election Officer or a lawyer of the Commission, as Chairman, and as members, the Municipal Treasurer and DepEd District Supervisor thereat, subject to Section 26 hereof.

At least five (5) days before the day of the plebiscite, the Chairman shall issue a written notice to the other members of the Board that it shall convene at four o'clock in the afternoon of plebiscite day to canvass the plebiscite returns. Notice of said meeting shall be posted in conspicuous places in the municipal building and other public places of Buluan, Talayan, Talitay, Maguindanao; and Kabuntalan and Parang, Shariff Kabunsuan. The MPBCs shall meet at the Session Hall of their respective municipal buildings not later than four o'clock in the afternoon of plebiscite day, immediately canvass the plebiscite returns and shall not adjourn until the canvass is completed.

SEC. 24. Supervision and Control over the Municipal Plebiscite Board of Canvassers. – The Commission shall have direct control of and supervision over the Municipal Plebiscite Boards of Canvassers (MBC) and may *motu proprio* relieve at any time any member thereof for cause and may substitute him in accordance with Section 28 hereof.

SEC. 25. Absence of a Regular Member. – In case of absence of a regular member of the MPBC, the members present shall first verify whether or not the notice stating the date, time and place of canvassing has been duly served on the absent regular member.

In the absence of such notice, one shall be immediately sent to the absent member. If the latter cannot be located, or his whereabouts are unknown, he shall then be substituted. These facts shall be recorded in the minutes of the MPBC. As soon as the absent member appears, the substitute member shall relinquish his seat to the regular member.

SEC. 26. Incapacitated Regular Member. – In case of sickness or serious injury of the regular member of the PBC, a sworn medical certificate shall be required attesting to the incapacity of said member. Upon submission of the medical certificate, a substitute shall be appointed. Said certificate shall be recorded in the Minutes of the MPBC.

SEC. 27. Substitution of Chairman and Members. – In case of non-availability, absence, disqualification due to relationship, or incapacity for any cause of the chairman of the PBC, the Commission shall appoint a lawyer of the Commission as substitute. With respect to the other members of the MPBC, the Commission shall appoint as substitute the following in the order named: Municipal Administrator, the Municipal Assessor, the Clerk of Court nominated by the Executive Judge of the Municipal Trial Court, and other available appointive Municipal official.

SEC. 28. Prohibition Against Leaving Official Station. – During the period beginning December 20, 2006 until the completion of the canvass, no member or substitute member of the PBC shall be transferred, assigned or detailed outside of his official station nor shall he leave his station without prior authority of the Commission.

SEC. 29. Quorum. – A majority of the members of the MPBC shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. A majority vote of all the members thereof shall be necessary to render a decision.

SEC. 30. Watchers: Rights and Duties. - The proponents and oppositors; the citizens' arm of the Commission, if any, and other accredited groups or organizations may appoint watchers during the voting, counting and canvassing. A person who is not a registered voter of the municipality, or of questionable reputation, or who has been convicted of an election offense or any other crime shall not be appointed as watcher. Barangay officials, including barangay tanods, are disqualified to serve as watchers.

The watchers shall have the right to:

(a) be present at, and take note of all the proceedings;
(b) read the plebiscite returns without touching them; and
(c) file a protest against any irregularity noted in the plebiscite returns or in the proceedings of the PBC and obtain the resolution thereon in writing.

The watcher shall not be allowed to participate in the deliberation of the MPBC.

SEC. 31. Right to be Present and to Counsel. - Proponents or oppositors have the right to be present and to counsel during the canvass of the Plebiscite returns and Municipal Certificates of Canvass and Proclamation. Only one counsel shall argue for the proponent or oppositor. In case there are several counsel for the proponents or oppositors, the counsel shall agree among themselves who will argue for them.

SEC. 32. Internal Canvassing Procedures of the MPBC. - The MPBC shall meet promptly at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon of plebiscite day and canvass the votes in the following manner:

a. The Chairman of the MPBC shall list sequentially all precincts in the Statement of Votes (SOVs) by precinct and ensure that every precinct in the project of precincts is listed therein. The MPBC Chairman shall produce before the members, the ballot boxes containing plebiscite returns;

b. Before opening a ballot box, the MPBC shall record the conditions and serial numbers of the ballot boxes and the self-locking serially numbered fixed length seals;

c. The Chairman of the MPBC shall then open the ballot box, retrieve the envelopes containing plebiscite returns and record in its Minutes of Canvass, the condition and serial number of the envelopes and their paper seals;

d. The Chairman of the MPBC shall open the envelope one at a time, record the condition and serial number of the plebiscite returns and its paper seal, and forthwith open the same for canvassing;
Only such number of envelopes containing plebiscite returns that can be canvassed during the meeting of the board shall be opened, which number shall be recorded in the Minutes of Canvass;
Entries in the SOV by Precinct shall be made every time a plebiscite returns is canvassed. Once the SOV is completed, the members of the MPBC shall sum up the number of precincts canvassed, the number of registered voters, the number of voters who actually voted, and the total Affirmative and Negative votes therein, and thereafter affix their signatures above their names appearing at the certification portion of the form;

e. In case its copy of a plebiscite returns is missing, the MPBC shall obtain such missing returns from the Plebiscite Committee concerned. If said returns have been lost or destroyed, the MPBC, upon prior authority of the Commission, may use any of the authentic copies of said returns or a certified copy thereof issued by the Commission. Forthwith, the MPBC shall refer the case for investigation to the Regional Election Director (RED) concerned who shall report his findings to the Commission; and

f. Each time the MPBC suspends its meetings or adjourns for the purpose of awaiting for the other plebiscite returns, it shall:
  1. Determine the totals of all Affirmative and Negative votes canvassed;
  2. Accomplish the SOV by precinct in four (4) copies and close the same with the initials of the members following the last entry of Affirmative and Negative votes;
  3. Place the SOV in an envelope, which shall be sealed with a serially numbered paper seal and signed by the members in the presence of all the members of the board and the watchers; and
  4. Place the plebiscite returns already canvassed, the remaining unopened envelopes, and envelope containing a copy of the SOV inside a ballot box which shall be locked with three padlocks and the self-locking serially numbered fixed length seal, the serial number of which shall be duly recorded in the Minutes of Canvass;
     Each member of the MPBC shall keep a key to the three padlocks of a ballot box, so that it cannot be opened without all of them being present. The ballot box shall be deposited in a secured room for safekeeping until the resumption of its meeting;
  5. At the resumption of the canvass, the secretary of the MPBC shall:
     a. Get the ballot box from the secured room and verify the condition of the ballot box, the three padlocks and the self-locking serially numbered fixed length seal;
     b. Enter in the Minutes a description of the condition thereof, as well as the serial numbers of the self-locking serially numbered fixed length seals;
     c. Destroy the self-locking serially numbered fixed length seals in the presence of the other members of the board and watchers; and
     d. Present to the MPBC the remaining unopened envelopes containing plebiscite returns and the official SOV contained in a duly sealed and signed envelope.
  6. After all the plebiscite returns have been canvassed, the MPBC shall:
     a. Prepare a tally of the total Affirmative and Negative votes including the data on the number of registered voters, number of voters who actually voted, and the total number of precincts it has canvassed. Such tally should be publicly accessible to ensure transparency; and
     b. Place the plebiscite returns copy for the MPBC in their their respective envelopes and deposit the same inside the ballot box which shall be locked with three padlocks and sealed with a self-locking serially numbered fixed length seals.
  7. Each member of the MPBC shall keep a key corresponding to the three padlocks of the ballot box.

SEC. 33. Minutes of the Canvass of the MPBC. – The MPBC shall prepare three (3) copies of the Minutes of the Canvass.

The first copy shall be submitted to the Law Department of the Commission within ten (10) days from termination of canvass. The second copy shall be deposited inside the ballot box. The third copy shall be forwarded to the Office of the Deputy Executive Director for Operations.

SEC. 34. Completion of the Canvass. – The MPBC shall sign the certification and affix their thumbmarks at the bottom of each SOV, and, using a separate SOV, consolidate data including the total Affirmative and Negative votes. Thereafter, it shall prepare a Certificate of Canvass and Proclamation (COCP) which shall contain the following data:

1. Number of precincts canvassed;
2. Number of registered voters;
3. Number of voters who actually voted;
4. Number of Affirmative and Negative votes; and
5. Whether or nor the Affirmative or Negative votes constitute the majority of the votes cast in the municipality or barangay, as the case may be.
   The members of the MPBC shall print their full names and affix their signatures and thumb marks in the proper space at the bottom of both forms and certify under oath that the entries therein are true and correct.

SEC. 35. Distribution of the COCP. – The COCP shall be prepared in four (4) copies, supported by a Statement of Votes by Precinct, and distributed as follows:

(1) The original copy shall, within three (3) days from proclamation, be sent to the Election Records and Statistics Department of the Commission;
(2) The second copy shall be filed in the Office of the Election Officers concerned;
(3) The third copy shall be submitted to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government; and
(4) The fourth copy shall be submitted to the Municipal Mayors of the local government units concerned.

SEC. 36 Applicability of the Omnibus Election Code and Other Election Laws – The pertinent provisions of the Omnibus Election Code, Republic Acts No. 6646, 7160, 9054, 6734 MMAA No. 25 and other election laws and resolutions of the Commission which are not inconsistent herewith shall, as far as practicable, apply to the plebiscite subject of this Resolution.

SEC. 37. Implementation. – The Deputy Executive Director for Operations, assisted by the Directors of the Election and Barangay Affairs Department, Finance Services Department, and Administrative Services Department, shall implement this Resolution to ensure the holding of a free, orderly, honest, peaceful and credible plebiscite.

The Deputy Executive Director for Operations in coordination with the Regional Election Director of ARMM and the Provincial Election Supervisors of Maguindanao and Shariff Kabunsuan, shall supervise the conduct of the plebiscite. They shall regularly submit report to Office of the Deputy Executive Director for Operations on the status/development of the on-going plebiscite activities.

SEC. 38. Dissemination. –The Education and Information Department shall cause the immediate publication of this Resolution in one (1) daily newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines and one (1) newspaper with local circulation in the Municipalities of Buluan, Talayan, Talitay, Province of Maguindanao; and of the Municipalities of Kabuntalan and Parang, Province of Shariff Kabunsuan, and give it the widest publication and dissemination possible.

The Deputy Executive Director for Operations shall furnish the Regional Election Director of the ARMM; the Provincial Election Supervisors of Maguindanao and Shariff Kabunsuan; the Secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government; the Secretary of the Department of Education; and the Municipal Mayors, Municipal Treasurers and the DepEd Supervisors of Buluan, Talayan and Talitay, Maguindanao; and Kabuntalan and Parang, Shariff Kabusuan, with a copy of this Resolution.

The Election Officers of Buluan, Talayan and Talitay, Province of Maguindanao, and Kabuntalan and Parang, Province of Shariff Kabunsuan, shall give this resolution the widest dissemination in his/her municipality.

SEC. 39. Effectivity. – This Resolution shall take effect upon its publication.

SO ORDERED.

BENJAMIN S. ABALOS
Chairman

RESURRECCION Z. BORRA
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON, JR.
Commissioner

On Official Business
ROMEO A. BRAWNER
Commissioner

RENE V. SARMIENTO
Commissioner

NICODEMO T. FERRER
Commissioner

(PDI--Dec. 14, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines

CEBU PORT AUTHORITY

CIP Complex, Serging Osmeña Boulevard, North Reclamation Area, Cebu City
E-mail : cpa@cpa.gov.ph
Telephone 232-1461 to 63 • 231-6856 to 57
Fax No. 231-6848

AN INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY/APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Cebu Port Authority, North Reclamation Area, Cebu City, invites accredited and duly registered contractors to participate in the public bidding of the following projects:

1. NAME OF PROJECT: **PROVISION OF OFFICE, PASSENGER TERMINAL AND COVERED CATWALK AND REPAIR OF PAVEMENT AND ARMOUR SLOPE PROTECTION @ PORT OF TALOOT, ARGAO, CEBU**

A. Scope of Work
  1. Health and Safety Supplies
  2. Excavation of Zocalo Footing (21.0 cu.m.)
  3. Fabrication and installation of Rebars for Footing, Column, Flooring, Roof Beam, Gutter and Parapet including Formworks and Scaffoldings
  4. Concrete Pouring of Footing, Column, Flooring, Roof Beam, Gutter and Parapet
  5. Piling of CHB Wall and Two Sides Plastering including Septic Tank and Catch Basin.
  6. Fabrication and Installation of Steel Truss Purlins, Sag Rod and Cross Bracing including Painting
  7. Installation of Ceiling Joist with Ceiling Cover
  8. Installation of Roofing Materials
  9. Doors, Counters and Windows
  10. Installation of Floor, Counter and Wall Tiles

B. **Classification** Medium A for Building

C. **Equipment Requirements:**

1 unit	Bar Cutter	- Owned
2 units	One Bagger Concrete Mixer	- Owned
1 unit	Engine Driven Welding Machine	- Owned
1 unit	Cut-Off Wheel Machine	- Owned
1 unit	Cutting Outfit	- Owned
1 unit	Back Hoe (0.90 cu.m. Capacity)	- Owned/Leased
2 units	Dump Truck (10W Capacity)	- Owned
1 unit	Road Grader	- Owned/Leased
1 unit	Vibratory Road Roller	- Owned/Leased
1 unit	Payloader	- Owned/Leased

D. **Estimated Project Cost**	P 10,845,837.00
Source of Funding	**CPA Corporate Fund**
Cost of Eligibility Statement	**P 1,000.00**
Issuance of Eligibility Statement	**December 18 - 22, 2006**
Deadline for Submission of duly accomplished Eligibility Statement	**January 03, 2007**

Prospective bidders shall submit to the BAC Chairman of this office their duly accomplished Eligibility Statements in HARD/BOOK-BOUND form. Eligibility Statements submitted other than Hard/Book-Bound form shall not be accepted.

Bid securities in the form of surety bond, Callable on Demand, can be secured from the GSIS or other private insurance & surety companies duly accredited by the office of the Insurance Commission. Prospective bidders shall submit the necessary documents or evidence to prove ownership of equipment and the duly notarized lease contract indicating the brand, serial number, capacity, and present location of equipment being leased.

Prospective bidders are required to present the original copy of Contractor's License/Certificate of Renewal and IAC Classification and Registration for verification/authentication before Pre-qualification or Eligibility Statement shall be issued.

All particulars relative to prequalification, bidding, evaluation of bids, and awards of contracts shall be governed by the provisions of R.A. 9184, and other rules and regulations as may be applicable.

CPA reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any formality/defect therein, and to accept such bid as may be deemed most advantageous to the government.

(Sgd.) **MARIO G. TAN**
BAC Chairman

Noted by:
(Sgd.) **ANGELO C. VERDAN**
General Manager

(PDI--Dec. 14, 2006)

For your Classified and Obituary Ads please call:
☎ 897-8425

SOCIAL HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION

a subsidiary of National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation

INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY AND BID

The Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC), a subsidiary of National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation, located at Filomena Bldg., 104 Amorsolo St., Legaspi Village, Makati City is inviting interested parties to prequalify and participate in the forthcoming public bidding for the following items/goods stated below:

1) Manpower Services for 60 Encoders for the period of six (6) months
2) Manpower Services (particularly Clerical Staff, Janitor/ Janitress, Messenger and Carpenter with the present requirements of approximately 10 manpower complement and with possible succeeding requirements)
3) Security Services (with approximately 8 manpower complement requirement)
4) Bldg. Maintenance Manpower Services (Bldg. Administrator, Electrician, Aircon Technician)
5) Photocopying Services (2 units) with manpower complement
6) (1) Unit Bundy Clock and (1) Unit Biometric Time Keeping Machine
7) (1) Unit IBM Server

The checklist for prequalification documents may be obtained from the Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat at the 4th Floor, Filomena Bldg., during office hours from December 15 to 19, 2006. Prospective bidders shall be advised in due course of the results of their applications for the pre-qualification.

Only bidders who are pre-qualified can get copies of the Term of Reference and can participate in the bidding. The pre-bid conference, submission and opening of bids shall be announced later. We will be qualifying and evaluating bids on per item basis.

The SHFC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, disqualify any bidder or to accept bids as may be considered most advantageous to the Corporation or annul the bidding process anytime prior to the award of the bid without incurring any liability to the affected bidders or stating the grounds for SHFC action.

For further information/clarification on the above matters, please contact the Administration Department at telephone numbers 893-1501 local 290, 258 and 893-0491.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. FERMIN T. ARZAGA**
President

(PDI--Dec. 14, 2006)

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PNOC EXPLORATION CORPORATION

Building 1, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Telephone Nos. 893 6001 to 47 local 2104
Direct Line: 840 1614/Fax No.: (632) 840 1619

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC Exploration Corporation (PNOC EC), through its Corporate Budget, intends to apply the sum of Four Million Six Hundred Fourteen Thousand Six Hundred Ten and 88/100 Pesos (Php4,614,610.88) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for **THE COMPANY'S MALANGAS COAL PROJECT'S JANITORIAL AND GENERAL MANPOWER SERVICES CONTRACT** (the "Project"). Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at the bid opening.

PNOC EC now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the **janitorial and general manpower services contract for the Company's Malangas Coal Project** located in Malangas, Zamboanga Sibugay Province. The contract duration for the Project is one (1) year.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act", and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty (60%) percent interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only bids from bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The bidder with the lowest calculated bid shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the Project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by interested bidders from PNOC EC's Procurement Section (c/o Ms. J. C. Fabian) starting December 7, 2006 at the PNOC EC Head Office located in Building 1, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of One Thousand Pesos (Php1,000.00).

For purpose of clarifying certain issues, a Pre-bid Conference shall be held on ***December 18, 2006*** at ***10:00 A.M.*** at the Clubhouse Restaurant, Zamboanga City Golf and Country Club, Upper Calarian, Zamboanga City.

Bids and eligibility requirements must be submitted in three (3) sets each to PNOC EC's Bids and Awards Committee not later than ***3:00 P.M. on January 4, 2007.*** The bids including the eligibility requirements shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter. Late bids shall not be accepted.

PNOC EC reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

This publication is also posted in our website at www.pnoc-ec.com.ph and in the DBM website at www.procurementservice.net.

The Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI--Dec. 14, 2006)

TRADE & INDUSTRY
PHILIPPINES

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) invites all interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid for the **"Development of the Integrated Consumer Assistance Network (I-CAN)"** of the Department of Trade and Industry, with an approved budget of Five million five hundred five thousand pesos (Php5,505,000.00).

Bid documents will be available for issuance starting 14 December 2006 until 5 p.m. of 21 December 2006 during office hours at the Supply Section, General Administrative Service, Ground Floor, Trade & Industry Building, 361 Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City c/o Mr. Claudio H. Averilla, with telephone number 751-4996, after paying a non-refundable fee of Five thousand five hundred five pesos (Php 5,505.00). A pre-bid conference is scheduled on 21 December 2006, 9:30 A.M. at the Center Conference Room, 6th Floor, Trade & Industry Building, 361 Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City.

Deadline for the submission of the eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposals, and the opening of bids will be on 8 January 2007, 9:30 A.M. at the Center Conference Room, 6th Floor, Trade & Industry Building, 361 Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City. The DTI Bids and Awards Committee will not entertain late bidders.

The DTI reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare a failure of bididng, or not award the contract in any of the situations enumerated in Section 41 of R.A. 9184, otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act", and its implementing rules and regulations, without the DTI assuming any responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

(Sgd.) **MARIA LOURDES T. BAUA**
Assistant Secretary
Chairperson, DTI Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI–Dec. 14, 2006)

The Directors, Officers and Staff of the

Philippine National Bank

mourn the untimely demise of

OMAR BYRON P. MIER II

who peacefully joined his Creator on December 11, 2006.

He is survived by his bereaved parents,
PNB President & CEO Omar Byron T. Mier and Elena;
sister Mara, brother-in-law Andy and nephew Raul;
and brothers Norman and Andrew.

We join his family, relatives, friends and pious readers in praying for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at Arlington Memorial Chapel
12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

In lieu of flowers, the Mier family requests that donations be made to the victims of typhoon Reming under PNB Savings Account Number 583-520953-0. Or please make check donations payable to "Typhoon Reming victims in memory of Omar Byron Mier II."

In Memory of our Beloved

Delfin G. Ganapin, Sr.

*who passed away on December 13, 2006
at the age of 76.*

His wife, **Alice**

His children, **Delfin Jr.** and **Janet**, **Marietta**, **Samuel** and **Blez**, **Alfredo** (†) and **Anamie**, **Gina**, **Boy** (†), **Ma. Elenita** (†), **Alice** and **Raul**, and **Melinda**.

Grandchildren, **Jasmine**, **Delfin III**, **Janine**, **Samuel Paul**, **Josef Angelo** and **Alize Rosemary** and other relatives request the pious readers for prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Resurrection Chapel, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Mahinhin cor. Mayumi St., UP Village, Diliman, Quezon City (beside Claret School).

Cremation will be on Sunday, December 17, at 1:00 p.m. at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City.

Interment follows immediately at the Columbary of Sto. Niño de Cebu, Fisheries St., Visayas Ave., Quezon City.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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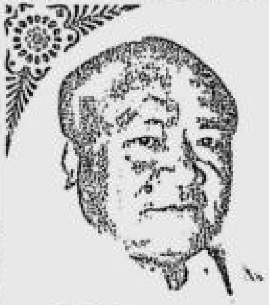

*I eagerly expect and
hope that I will in no way be
ashamed but will have sufficient
courage so that now as always
Christ will be exalted in my
body, whether by life or death.*
— Philippians 1:20

Ernesto C. Reyes

"Erning"

We, the family of the late District Engineer Ernesto C. Reyes;

Wife	**Carmen B. Estrada vda. de Reyes**
Children	**Atty. Rene & Grace** **Arch. Ric & Riah**
Siblings :	**Cely, Remy, Lynn, Rose, Ben, Juana, Salong, Boy, Naty & Paning**

express our heartfelt gratitude for your support, prayers & comforting words as we fondly remember him on the 40th day since he joined our Heavenly Father.

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

GUIA BALMORI AVELINO

(November 13, 1920 - December 12, 2006)

Her bereaved husband: **Jose Avelino, Jr.**; children and children-in-law: **Enriqueta** (†) and **Isagani Campo, Jr.** (†), **Marlene** and **Renato Valencia**, **Jose III**, **Eduardo** and **Cristina Guzman**, **Esther** and **Vernon Gamboa**, **Armando** and **Mariella Dabao**, **Bernadette** and **Jean Franco Espina**.

Cremation: Manila Memorial Park – December 13, 2006.

Burial: St. James The Great Crypt – December 13, 2006
Ayala Alabang Village, Muntinlupa City.

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*"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled,
and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*
— Luke 18:14

COL. EMMANUEL E. GLORIA SR. PN(M) (GSC) (Ret.)

*Peacefully joined the Lord on December 12, 2006
at the age of 66.*

His wife Dolores, children & spouses: Coco & Anne, Don & Odette, Eric & Jeline, Homer & Ellen, Pinky & Francis; grandchildren: Madelle, Earth, Winona, Oliver, Jiegs, Jon-Jon, EJ, Eliana, Elijah, Emrho, Daryl, Christian, Fitz & Felicity; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Holy Child Chapel, BNS Fort Bonifacio, Makati City.

Interment will be on Thursday, December 21, 2006 at the Libingan ng mga Bayani, Fort Bonifacio.

"TILL DEATH A TRUE MARINE"

More Classified Ads:
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CLASSIFIEDS

Angel Tree launched to grant wishes of child laborers

THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMployment (DOLE) launched last Dec. 4 the Project Angel Tree to gather and grant the wishes of child laborers through the building up of a network of patrons and supporters to the national efforts against child labor.

Labor and Employment Secretary Arturo D. Brion spearheaded the project's launching at the DOLE Executive Bldg., Intramuros, Manila. The project was also launched simultaneously in all DOLE regional offices nationwide.

Brion said that Project Angel Tree underscores efforts to protect and advance the welfare of the Filipino working children aged 17 years and below under the national program against child labor (NPACL).

He said that the project endeavors to get to the heart of the wishes of child laborers, adding that the project is a vehicle for child laborers through which they can articulate their wishes for assistance.

The labor chief noted that the wishes of the project's initial beneficiaries included educational and livelihood assistance and new clothes and food for Noche Buena.

He strongly called on employers and workers groups and other well-meaning organizations and individuals in communities where child labor is prevalent to support the project and grant the wishes of the child workers.

"Project Angel Tree is an opportunity for us to share and give happiness to another disadvantaged sector of our society – the children who are forced by circumstances to work and earn a living to support themselves and their families," Brion said.

He explained that the project is an attempt to improve the economic and social conditions of child laborers and their families and increase allies and advocates of child labor elimination.

Patrons and supporters of the project are symbolically represented by an Angel Tree bearing a broad array of services that shall be made available to child laborers and their families.

"The DOLE shall serve as a broker between those wanting assistance and those willing to extend the needed assistance," the labor chief said.

The project is being managed by the DOLE's Bureau of Women and Young Workers (BWYW) under Director Cythia Cruz.

Cruz said that the project has initially gathered the wishes of a total of 90 child laborers in a Wish Registry. The name, age, and sex of the children were culled from NGO and other partners. These groups included the Alliance of Concerned Teachers and the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines.

She said that most of the children wished for educational assistance. Some want livelihood assistance and medical services for the sick members of their family. The others want new clothes and food for the Christmas celebration.

Interested groups and individuals wanting to know and grant the wishes of the child laborers may call Project Angel Tree Hotline at 528-0119 or visit the nearest DOLE regional office.

NEGROS OCCIDENTAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Kabankalan City, Negros Occidental Tel. Nos. 4712-339; 746-9255
Fax No. (034) 4712-829
E-mail: noceco@glinesnx.com.ph Website: www.noceco.ph

December 11, 2006

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID

The NEGROS OCCIDENTAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (NOCECO) is inviting all interested contractors to pre-qualify and bid for the **SUPPLY OF MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION OF A 69KV SUB-TRANSMISSION LINE FROM BINALBAGAN TO LA CASTELLANA WITH A TOTAL LENGTH OF 20 KMS.**

The 69 Sub-transmission line will utilize 22 mtrs. pre-stressed rectangular "I" Section Concrete Pole.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures. Interested bidders shall comply with Accreditation Requirements (for submission to the Accreditation Chairman, Noel P. Garbo) as follows:

a) Company Profile
b) Business Registration
c) Business Permit
d) BIR/VAT Certificate
e) Latest Income Tax Return (ITR)
f) List of Clients for a period of three (3) years
g) Financial Statement

And must be able to pay Php 10,000.00 (for this particular bidding only and not refundable) for bid documents during the pre-bid conference.

Schedule of Activities are as follows:

BIDDING SCHEDULES	
Intent to Bid	December 21, 2006
Accreditation Period	December 22-29, 2006
Pre-Bid Conference	January 8, 2007
Public Bidding	January 22, 2007

NOCECO reserves the right to reject any/or all bid without any reason, waive any formality therein, accepts proposal most advantageous to the cooperative and assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify any bidder for expenses or losses that may be incurred in the preparation of bid nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(Sgd.) LAMBERTO M. CANLAS
General Manager

(PDI – December 14, 2006)

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143 I LOVE YOU RED CROSS

In observance of the International Volunteers Day of the Philippine National Red Cross which was held last December 5, at Market Market – Taguig City, the "143 I Love You Red Cross" was officially launched. The celebration was attended by the Philippine National Red Cross Chapters from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao regions. Photo shows the Quezon City Chapter Volunteers – one of the biggest attendees with National Chairman Richard Gordon, Jr., PNRC-QC Directors Rafael S. Chico, Edgardo Madamba and Digna Dela Cruz.

AHS '71 International Christmas party

AHS CLASS '71 INTERNATIONAL (N.O.N.I. GROUP) will have a Christmas Party on Saturday, 16 December 2006, 4:00 P.M. at the Clubhouse of Topland Subd. in Sucat, Parañaque. For details, please call Susan Pasia -927-4245 loc. 4101; Weng Perote - 825-9593; Bessie Camacho-de Guzman - 632-6031; Beth Andres - 897-8808 loc. 502.

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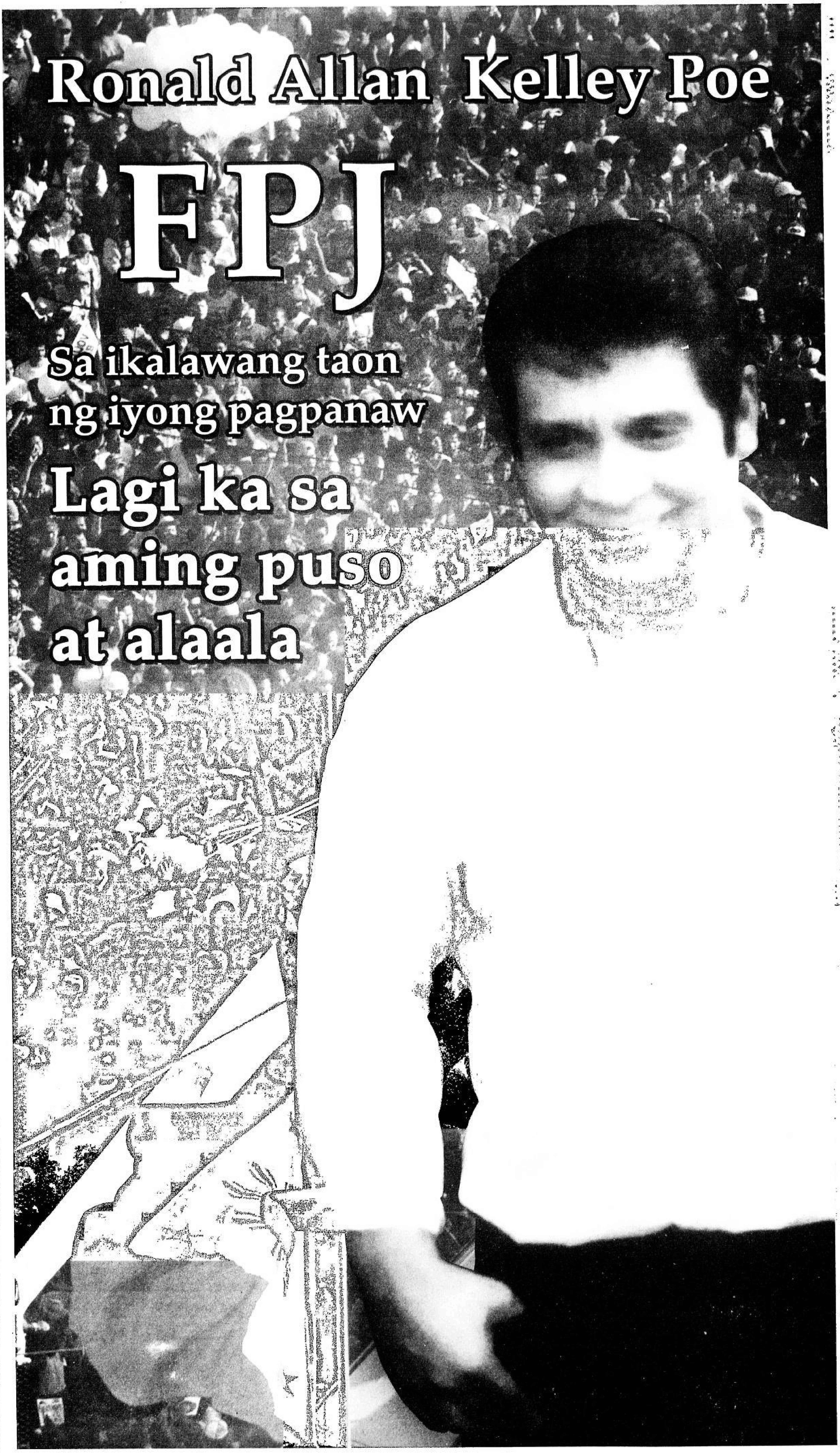

Ronald Allan Kelley Poe

FPJ

Sa ikalawang taon
ng iyong pagpanaw

Lagi ka sa
aming puso
at alaala

EASTWOOD
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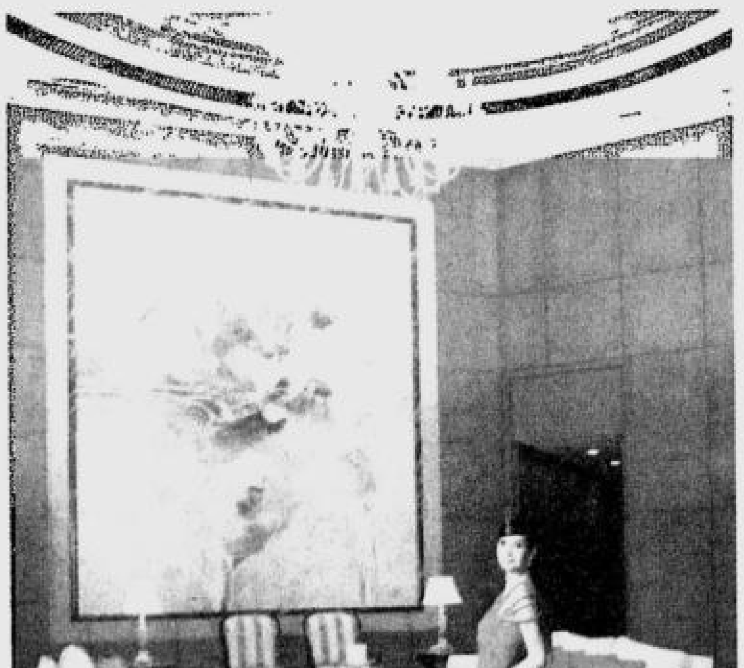

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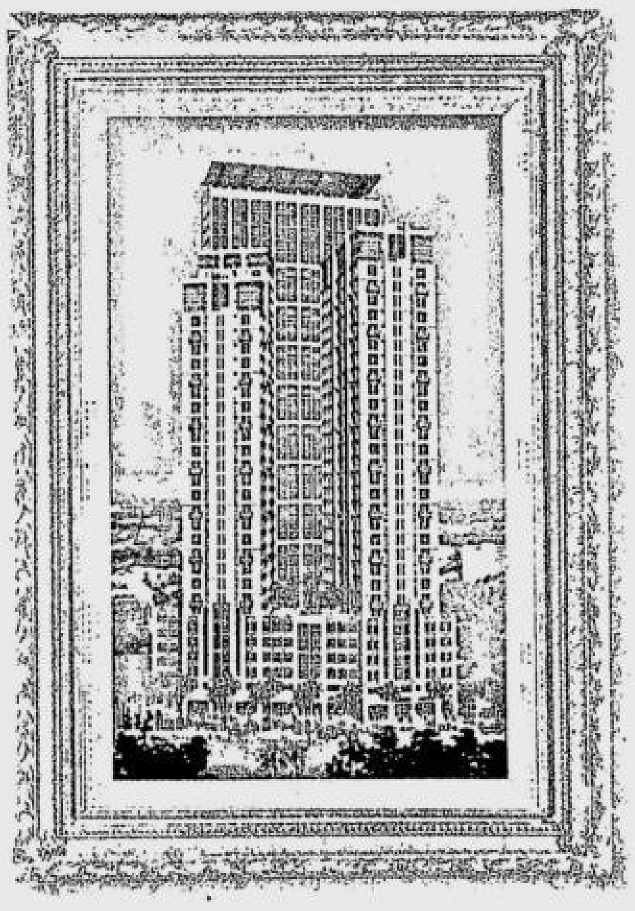

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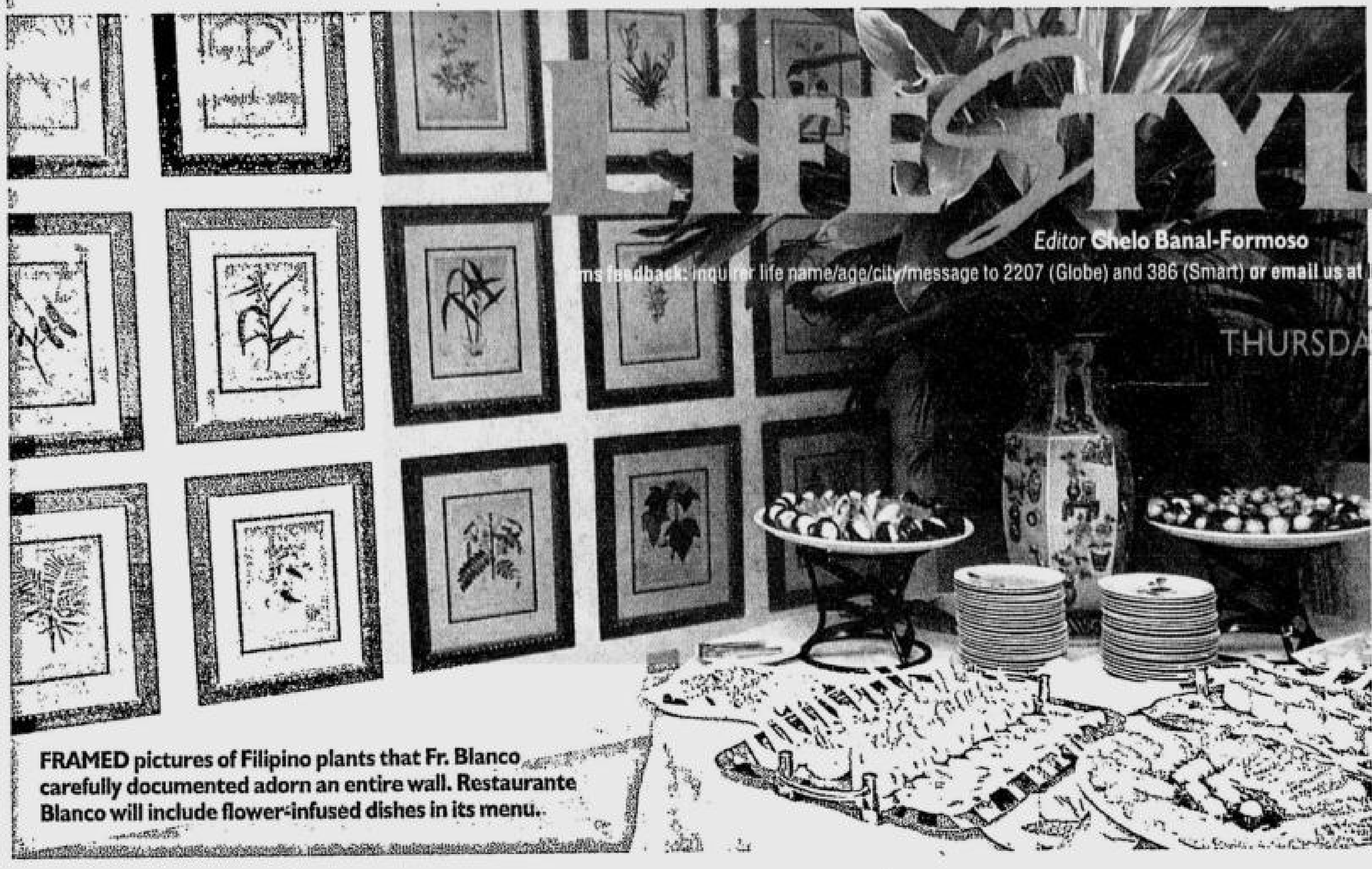
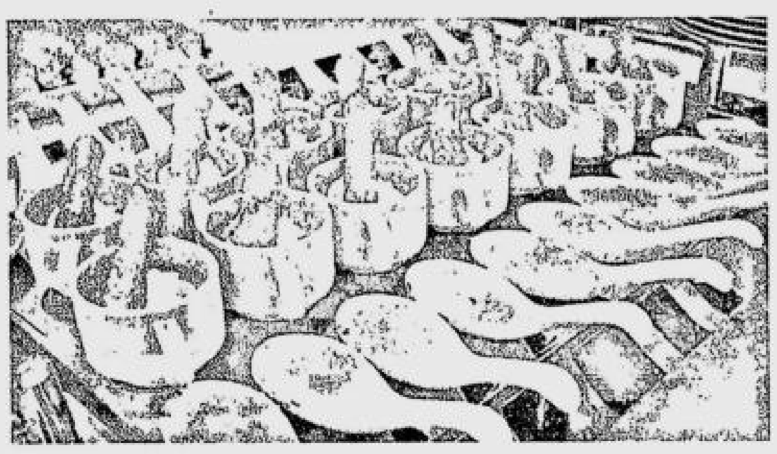


FRAMED pictures of Filipino plants that Fr. Blanco carefully documented adorn an entire wall. Restaurante Blanco will include flower-infused dishes in its menu.

BOUGAINVILLEA is in full bloom in Fr. Blanco's "garden."

Fr. Blanco's garden moves indoor



Named after the Augustinian who started the documentation of Philippine flora, Intramuros' new restaurant is filled with 'flowers'

By Linda B. Bolido

A GARDEN WITHIN A GARden is what Lynn Sunico of the Makati Skyline group has come up with this time.

She can do no less. After all, her restaurant is in the middle of a garden in Intramuros memorializing the Augustinian father Manuel Blanco, author of the four-volume "Flora de Filipinas" released around 1837. The books were the earliest effort to document the Philippines various plants, including their medicinal values.

So inside Restaurante Blanco, as Sunico's latest venture is called, flowering bougainvillea and *cadena de amor* cover some wall panels. Colorful *bandera española* "fill" the outer side of the bar counter while a fruiting banana stands tall and straight near the door leading to the kitchen. In some nooks, the *gumamela* is in full bloom.

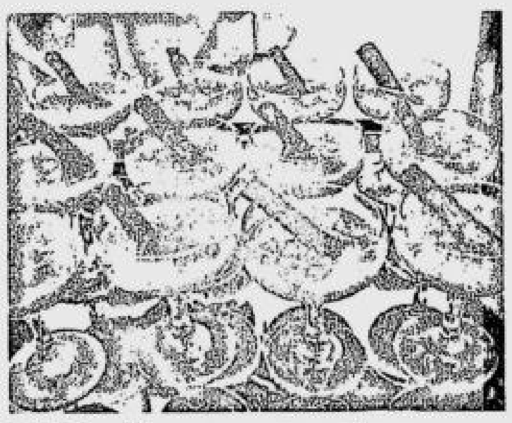
Chairs are covered in foliage and, on the walls of the buffet area, tiny vintage plants "grow." Even the china are decorated with blooms in vibrant hues.

Every plant is actually only a recreation of the real thing but so much effort has gone into trying to bring indoor, through painting and framed prints, the plants that Blanco wrote about in his scholarly treatise some 300 years ago.

The "greenery" inside the restaurant has created an ambiance similar to that of a cozy, elegant European, if not strictly Spanish, drawing room.

For, as the name suggests, Restaurante Blanco, befitting the man after whom it was named, will specialize in Spanish and Filipino cuisine.

The Makati Skyline's executive chef, Michelle la Tulle, will also be commanding the restaurant's troops, so to speak. Guests at the recent formal opening of the restaurant got a tempting peek at what to expect when the place was fully operational.



TWO Spanish restaurant must-haves: Gazpacho, chilled tomato soup (above); and Churros con Chocolate (top)

The buffet included Gazpacho, a chilled tomato soup; Gilda (Pimiento green Olives, Anchovies, red bell pepper, green chili, marinated carrots and almond), Hidalgo de Oca (Pan-fried goose liver flavored truffle oil in French baguette), Pasta de Fideos (Fideos noodles with Shellfish, shrimps in saffron broth topped with Manchego flakes), Boqueroles (Marinated Anchovies in Vinaigrette), Lengua con Oliva, Sandica con Jamon (Watermelon wrapped in Spanish Ham drizzled with Olive Oil sprinkled with feta cheese and chili flakes), Churros with Chocolate Mousse and Mascarpone.

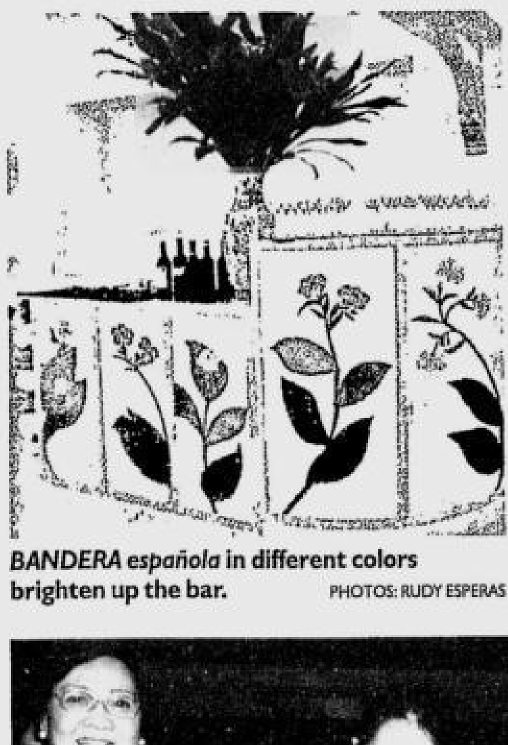
At the moment, Restaurante Blanco has yet to open its doors to ordinary diners. Sunico expects they will be ready for this in January.

But being adjacent to the historic San Agustin church, the restaurant has been kept busy catering receptions that follow the wedding ceremonies, as well as other functions.

The 25-year-old Makati Skyline has actually catered numerous receptions held at Father Blanco's garden. But after 10 years of doing the job, Sunico decided it was time for some makeover and refurbishing, hence, Restaurante Blanco.

When it finally opens its doors to the general public, the fine-dining restaurant will offer a cuisine that will include "flower" recipes, exotic dishes infused with some edible blooms, not to mention fresh herbs.

Restaurante Blanco will be open 10 a.m.-10 p.m. It is at the San Agustin Church Compound, Sta. Potenciana corner General Luna Streets, Intramuros, Manila; tel. 5219999. It can accommodate 80 people for sit-down meals and 150 for cocktails.



***BANDERA** española* **in different colors brighten up the bar.** PHOTOS: RUDY ESPERAS

LYNN R.S. Sunico, Mexican Ambassador Erendira Paz Campos, Spanish Ambassador Ignacio Sagaz, Fr. Pedro Galende, OSA, and Rene Sunico cut the ceremonial ribbon.

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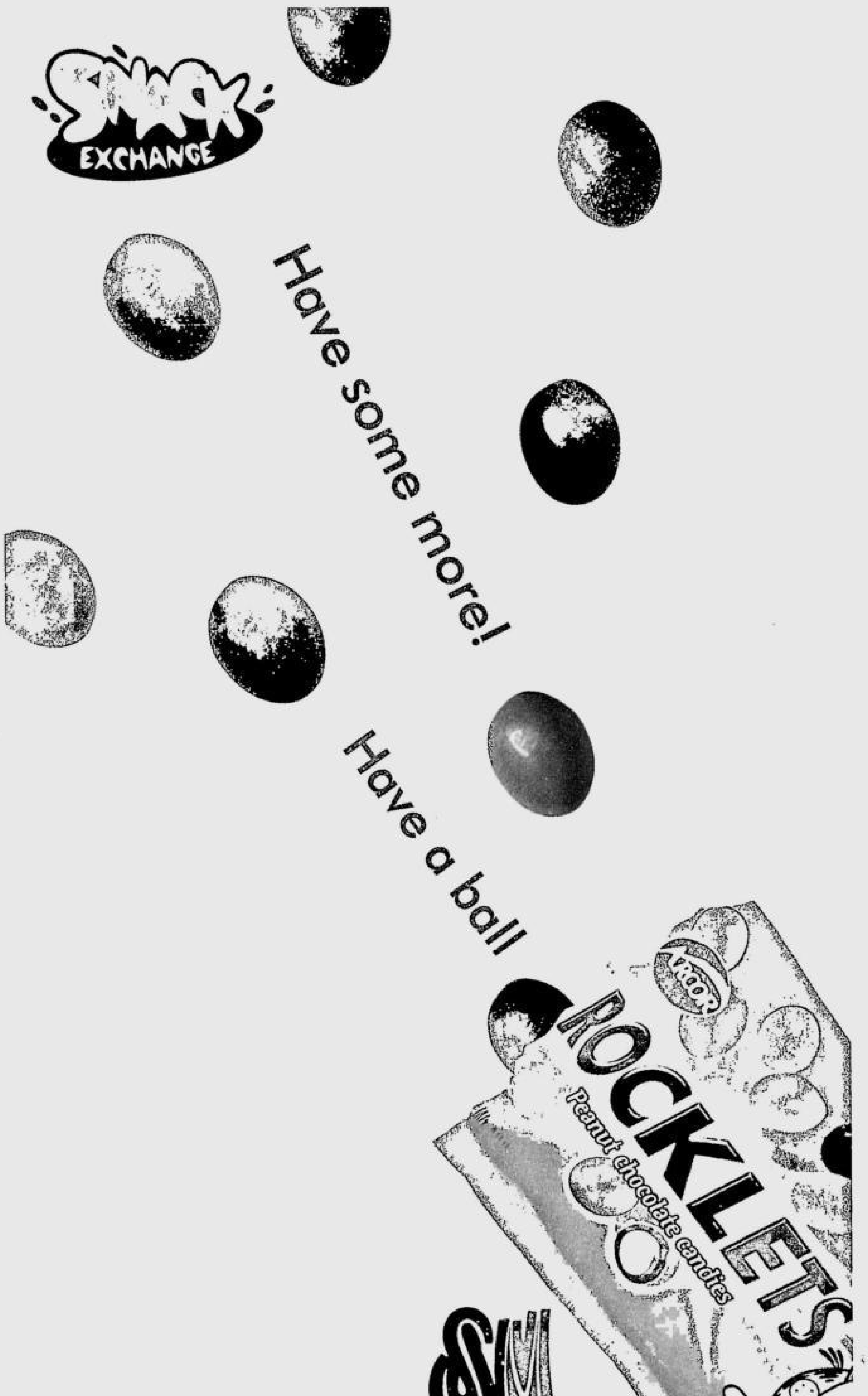

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THE CONSUMER

Convenience is depleting valuable resources

By Linda B. Bolido

THE "THROW-AWAY" CULTURE AND economy has been convenient for almost everyone.

As Lester R. Brown, head of the respected Earth Policy Institute, says, "For example, rather than washing cloth towels or napkins, consumers welcomed disposable paper versions.

"Thus we have substituted facial tissues for handkerchiefs, disposable paper towels for hand towels, disposable table napkins for cloth ones, and throwaway beverage containers for refillable ones. Even the shopping bags we use to carry home throwaway products become part of the garbage flow."

Even appliances seem made to be replaced, rather than repaired, when they break down.

But Brown warns that the "throwaway economy is on a collision course with the earth's geological limits." In a recent report, "A New Materials Economy," Brown says, "Aside from running out of landfills near cities, the world is also fast running out of the cheap oil that is used to manufacture and transport throwaway products."

He says other materials that sustain the throwaway economy may not last "beyond another two or three generations."

Plastics, as many of us now know, are among the products derived from oil, which is increasingly becoming in short supply. Paper, of course, comes from trees, the cutting of which has resulted in floods, erosion and mud slides.

Brown adds, "Assuming an annual two-percent growth in extraction, US Geological Survey data on current economically recoverable reserves show the world has 18 years of reserves remaining for lead, 20 years for tin, 25 years for copper, 64 years for iron ore, and 69 years for bauxite."

Aside from the drain on resources, the "throw-away" culture also means garbage that is becoming harder to dispose of because of sheer volume.

Brown says the United States' municipal solid waste management systems, for instance, "collect 3.4 pounds of product waste a day for each American man, woman and child—twice as much as in 1960 and 10 times as much as 100 years ago."

Filipinos, particularly Metro Manilans, can no doubt relate to Brown's statement that "the cost of hauling garbage from cities is rising as nearby landfills fill up and the price of oil climbs.

"Increased road maintenance costs, traffic congestion, increased air pollution, noise, potential water pollution from landfill leakage, and complaints from nearby communities" are problems that Metro Manila and other major urban centers have faced and continue to face as the volume of garbage steadily grows.

Not so long ago, the metropolis faced another garbage crisis as municipalities hosting landfills indicated they were no longer willing to do so.

And, as another recent controversy demonstrated, affluent countries are now adopting the practice of "exporting" their trash and poor countries like the Philippines are expected to "welcome" it for a fee.

3 Rs

The solution to the problem, according to Brown, is the mantra that environmentalists have adopted: reduce-reuse-recycle. Brown says the throwaway economy has to be replaced. Whether it is New York or Metro Manila, Brown says "the challenge should be less what to do with the garbage and more of how to avoid producing it in the first place."

The Ecological Waste Coalition of the Philippines reiterates the need to reduce, reuse and recycle as it enjoins consumers to "celebrate responsibly" through a waste-free and simple Christmas to help conserve resources and protect the environment.

The coalition, suggests among other things:

Use recycled materials for Christmas décor or reuse old Christmas trimmings.

Use bulbs with low wattage to save on energy and only use decorative lights that meet safety standards.

Have modest festivities. If food is catered, request for reusable utensils. If food is bought from restaurants, bring containers to avoid the use of throwaway plastic and Styrofoam containers.

Choose reusable cloth napkins.

When shopping, prepare a list and plan your trip to save on fuel. Walk, cycle or use public transportation if possible.

Bring a reusable bag, basket or *bayong*.

Choose environment-friendly products or personalize gifts by making them yourself.

Give a new look to old items instead of throwing them into the dust bin.

Choose gifts that do not need to be wrapped like potted plants, gift checks.

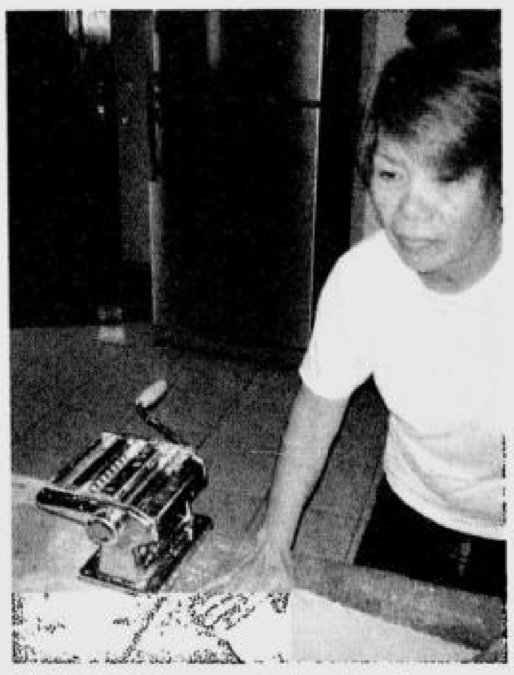
Use old magazines or newspapers, old bandannas for wrapping.

Refrain from setting off firecrackers and never burn used tires.

Call the coalition at 9290376.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Mascardo and Yague Sts., Makati City; or e-mail lbolido@inquirer.com.ph

DELLA Jarantilla with Oling



TERESITA Abong, professional cook

COUNTRY COOKING
Micky Fenix

'Cocineros de campanilla'

I CAN SEE THEM STILL, MY *lola* and Mang Seto, in my mind's eye.

Lola teases her occasional cook about preparing for his sermon as pastor of his church. I want to ask Mang Seto why he has no *saya* like our priest but I can't because no one is supposed to ask adults anything without *lola's* permission.

I might have asked my mother since she was much more understanding of a little girl's curiosity. That's probably why I know that Mang Seto was a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses. And that he was a hired cook by profession who did special dishes for *lola* and my mama on certain occasions.

Those dishes I no longer remember or even those special occasions. Maybe it was because little girls were not supposed to be present on such occasions. So I asked my aunt, my mother's sister who lived with *lola*, but she couldn't remember either.

What I do recall are three other things about Mang Seto. One, he was bald so that his sweat went straight to his face when he was cooking. He had this small towel for wiping that sweat away.

When he was summoned, he was there for only a day. And one dish must have contained grapes because my uncle brought home some huge black grapes that Mang Seto said tasted like good wine.

A hired professional cook was called *kusinero de campanilla*, according to Gilda Cordero Fernando ("Philippine Food and Life," 1992). Fernando wrote that *de campanilla* referred to the bell that professionals, like doctors or lawyers, had in their offices to call their subordinates. The cook in the book was Ba Pedro who was hired by the Bautista family of Malolos, Bulacan.

Unlike me, Dez Bautista recalls so many dishes cooked, such as *pavo embochado, solomillo asado con vino, galantina* and *pastel de pichon* (stuffed turkey, tenderloin braised with wine, stuffed chicken and chicken pie).

Cook and stylist

But Ba Pedro wasn't just a cook. He was a food stylist who presented a turkey with cherries for earrings. He covered cooked calf's tongue with "a mountain of mashed potatoes." In the middle was hidden "an alcohol lamp that made the 'volcano' smoke."

Pampango and Batangas cooks were much in demand during the old days, according to Felice Sta. Maria in her book, "The Governor General's Kitchen" (Anvil Publishing, 2006). Among those she mentioned were Gil Mozas who catered the reception of the Margarita Roxas-Eduardo Soriano wedding; and Emilio Gonzalez who catered for Club Filipino where his *lengua, rellenos* and *lechonilla* (ox tongue, stuffed chicken and roasted pork) were legendary.

As for cooks who worked for certain families, Felice wrote of Apong Berang, hired by the wealthy Pamintuans of Pampanga. A sidebar in the book was an interview with Jose Rizal's cook in Hong Kong, Asing from Canton (Guandong province).

The book "Potlock: Hidalgo Bonding," edited by Jaime Laya and Adelaida Lim, acknowledges the contributions made by *cocineros* and *cocineras* to the family's culinary history. Mercedes Hilario had Pining. Mary Sandoval had Amparo. Alice Laya had Vacion. The Augusto Hidalgo family had Tonyo Ogayre and Ita Manay.

COOKED and uncooked *empanadas*

Of Tonyo, Lita Hidalgo, who married into the family, says he "cooked by feel and had a special talent for sneaking in his secret ingredients when no one was looking."

Ilonggo cooks

In Iloilo, on a recent research trip, two cooks were introduced to me.

Della Jarantilla, who owns Burgos Bakery in La Paz, brought out her mother's cook from the kitchen. Oling, as Consuelo Sonillo is called, enumerated the traditional Ilonggo food she still cooks.

There is *lupoy, paksiw* of saltwater fish called *lobo lobo* that is cooked wrapped in leaves. There is pork *pata*, blanched first by pouring hot water on it, then cooked with salt, soured with *libas* leaves or *batuan* fruits. After adding unripe *langka*, it is garnished with fried garlic. There is the other more known braised *pata* dish called KBL (*kadios, baboy, langka*), black-eyed peas with pork and unripe jackfruit.

At the home of Kristine Gaona Treñas, Teresita Abong demonstrated to me how to do the *empanada* with the crust so flaky and layered, they were good enough to be called *kaliskis* (fish scales).

Teresita's mother used to be the family cook, said Kristine. Teresita obviously inherited the talent. She accepts orders for Iloilo specialties. That day, we had *pancit Molo* and *lumpiang ubod* and the just-cooked *empanada* as our filling brunch.

Kristine and Eugene Jamerlan told me that when they organized lunch at the Molo Convent during the Heritage Month in May, the guest list went up from 30 to almost 300 as the event neared.

Teresita wasn't fazed at all when asked to increase the number of *empanada, panara* and *lumpiang ubod* at such short notice. Truly a *kusinera de campanilla*.

E-mail the author at pinoyfood04@yahoo.com

Give us this day

From page C4

Orbos has not even heard of it.

Why use only wooden spoons and glass bowls specifically?

Because anything made of metal might cause a chemical reaction with the starter.

How does it compare to other "holy breads?"

The St. Anthony bread is bread offered in thanksgiving to God for blessings received through St. Anthony.

The St. Nicholas of Tolentine bread was bread shown to St. Nicholas by the Blessed Virgin in a vision while he was ill. The bread dipped in water healed him. He thus started giving them away. The tradition lives on to date especially on his feast day.

Hemin, I think, is symbolic of the multiplication of loaves borne perhaps of Padre Pio's miracle of the bread. During World War II when food was scarce, people were begging for food in the monastery where only a few pieces of bread were left. Padre Pio went to church and to everyone's surprise, returned with a pile of bread. When asked, he said that there was a pilgrim at the door who gave it to him.

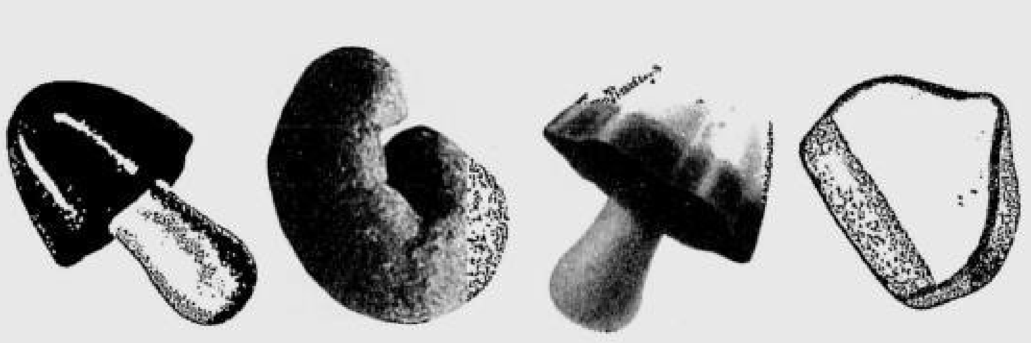
As to why you can only make and eat it once in your lifetime, beats me! I guess you become too lucky, too blessed or too good, and if you are too good, you are called to eternal life sooner than you should! Kidding!

I look forward to receiving my share as CG promised. I prefer chain bread to chain letters. At least, one gets to hone his or her baking skills and on the 10th day delight in the simple pleasure of freshly baked bread.

To believe or not to believe, that is the question. In my mind, the act of giving so others may receive is a gift. But to be able to share what was given, that is a blessing!

E-mail the author at raspiras@inquirer.com.ph

SNACK EXCHANGE
Meiji



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Sweet treats and festive meals

EDSA SHANGRI-LA HAS A TREASURE trove of treats at the Christmas Corner, particularly specially prepared hampers with gourmet goodies and premium wines.

At Heat, have a breakfast of *bibingka* and *puto bumbong* at 5:30-10:30 a.m., Dec. 16-24. Celebrate Christmas Day with a Seafood Buffet for lunch or dinner on Dec. 25.

Chef Kiyoshi Ogawa of Senju presents kaiseki set menus for Christmas dinner. Or enjoy a savory hot pot of fresh vegetables and meat.

Chef Francesco Rizzo of Paparazzi also has set holiday dinner menus. A dessert buffet features a Sabayon station.

Holiday buffets at Senju and Paparazzi are available Dec. 24-25 and Jan. 1.

Summer Palace presents a festive spread of Oriental favorites until Dec. 15. Chef Stephen Tam also offers authentic Cantonese choices set menus for lunch or dinner. For New Year, have a dim sum breakfast prepared by chef Danny Fong.

At the Lobby Lounge, the University of the Philippines Concert Chorus performs 6-6:45 p.m. and 7-7:45 p.m. the whole month of December.

Edsa Shangri-La and Operation Damayan lets you help the needy by buying holiday ornaments for the giant Christmas tree. The tree will be lighted Nov. 17. Call 6338888 at extensions 2738 and 2739, or 6369083.

Gingerbread cookie

MANDARIN ORIENTAL Manila's Paseo Uno is holding a gingerbread cookie decorating contest for kids aged 5-12 years.

Children lunching (P650+) at Paseo Uno on Dec. 17 can participate in the contest at the children's play area at the Captain's Bar 12 noon-2 p.m. using available cookie trimmings. Regular buffet lunch for adults is P1,030+.

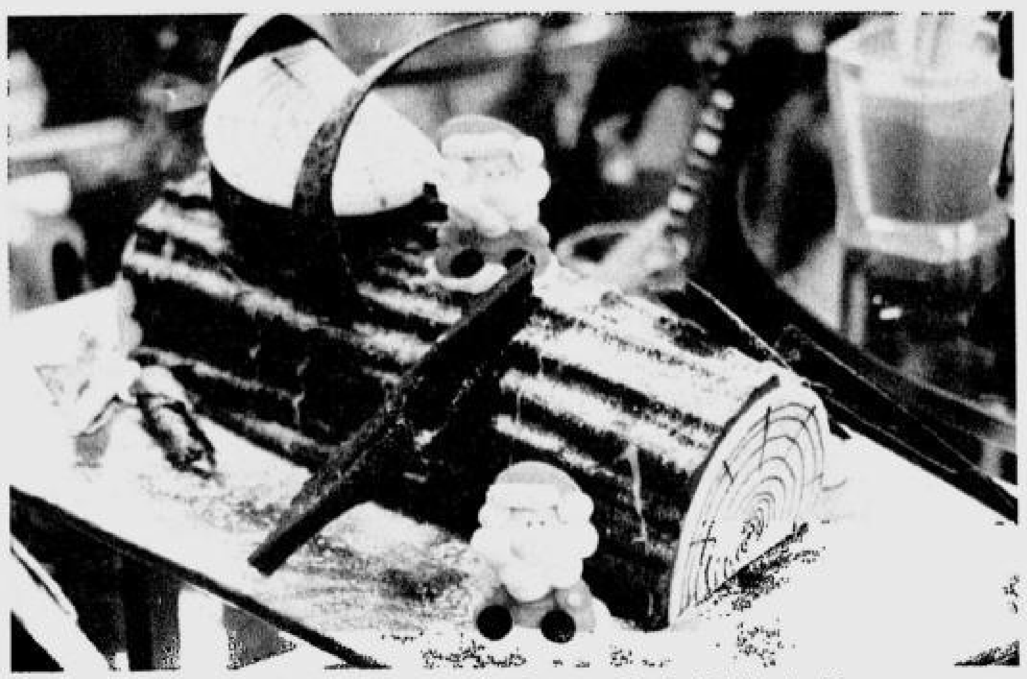
Gift packages and kiddie giveaways from Enchanted Kingdom and San Miguel Corporation await participants with the most unique and creative designs. Paseo Uno accepts Christmas and New Year reservations, and bookings for themed parties and celebrations. It is open daily 5:30 a.m.-12 midnight. Call 7508888 local 2411/2412.

White Christmas

THE SOFITEL Philippine Plaza has a white Christmas with a gingerbread house theme at the Christmas Goodies Corner at the Lobby, which offers freshly baked goodies as Christmas gifts like Amaretti, chocolate chip cookies, muffins, chocolate Santas, sugar-free chocolate clusters, fruit cakes and stollen bread. Turkey and ham are also available upon request.

Spiral has a Christmas-around-the-world theme with Harlequin dolls, Japanese kimonos with obi sashes, elves, candy canes and a chocolate castle.

It serves breakfast after the Misa de Gallo (Dec. 16-Jan. 1) that includes *churros con chocolate*, *puto bumbong*, *bibingka* and *salabat* station. Also available are national breakfasts of eight different countries.


CHOCOLATE Santas at the Christmas Goodies Corner of Sofitel Philippine Plaza

Siete Pecados Christmas buffet (Dec. 24-26) consists of antipasto, such as Smoked Salmon with Cranberry and Horseradish Cream, Smoked Tuna, Gravadlax with Roast Pumpkin Smoked Duck and Chestnut Salad, Scott Olio (Assorted Grilled Mediterranean Vegetables), Stuffed Mushroom with Turkey Giblet Stuffing, Christmas Paté (Duck and Mixed Berries), Goose with Orange and Cranberry Compote. Special Christmas dishes are Roasted Turkey with Christmas Stuffing, Rellenong Manok, Roasted Duck and Goose with Cumberland sauce, among others, while desserts include Christmas pudding, mini Christmas cakes, Christmas Log cake, White and Black Forest Cake, Bourbon Cake, Stollen bread and tortes such as Ginger and Chocolate and Sweet Chestnut. For New Year's Eve, Spiral has a special menu for brunch and dinner. The New Year's Eve feast is available till midnight.

Call Sofitel Philippine Plaza at 5515555, Spiral at local 1086 or 6988, Siete Pecados at 1231, 1232 and 5000.

Christmas delights

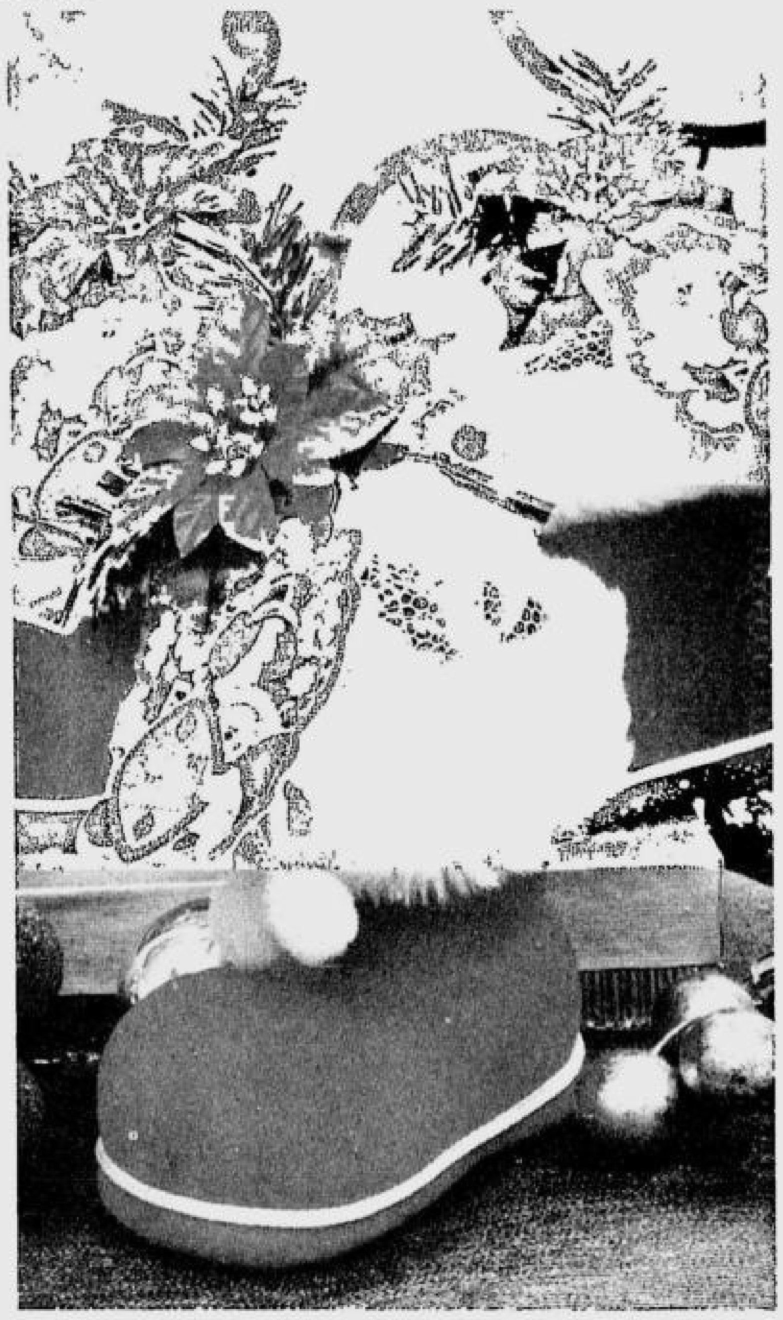
CROWNE PLAZA Galleria Manila offers several Christmas treats to make the season bright. The sugar-dusted Chocolate Cake is a dark-chocolate pastry, while the Snow Cake is made up of light vanilla chiffon layers, covered in snow-white meringue icing and topped with edible chocolate ornaments. The Christmas Log Cake is rolled chiffon cake filled with chocolate buttercream and covered in chocolate shavings. Also available are Caramel Nut Gateau and Swan Meringues on Chocolate Cups, as well as Christmas Star Cookies.

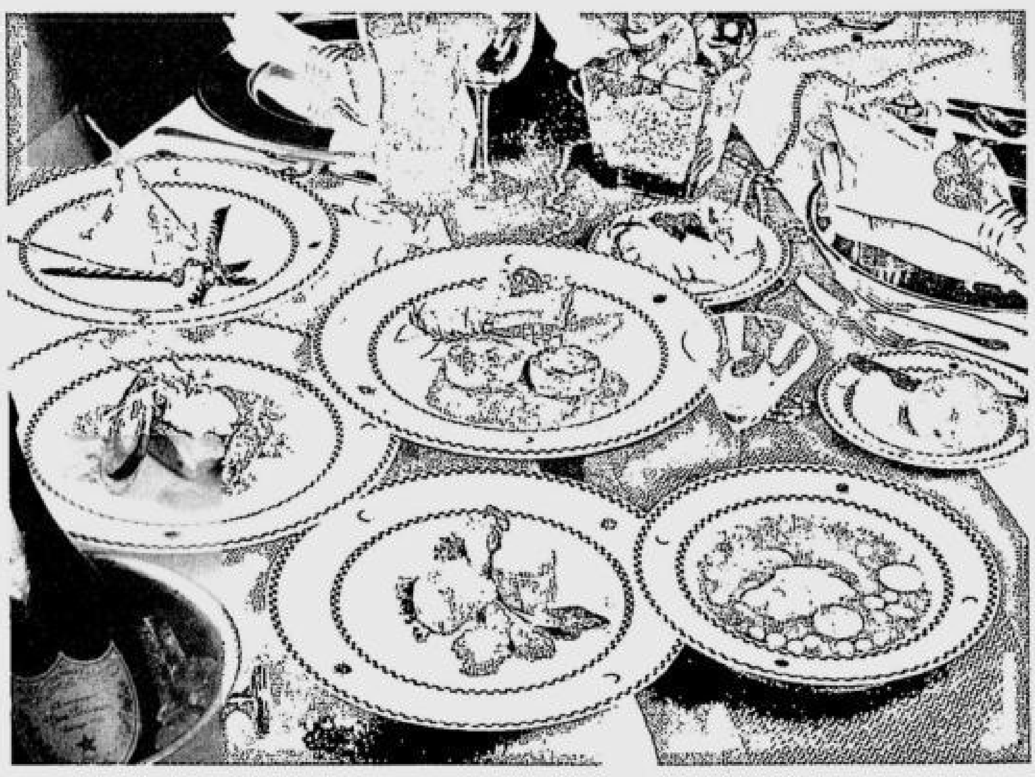
For Christmas dinners, the 4.5-kg slab of US Rib Eye with fried potatoes, mixed vegetables and gravy can feed a family of 20. *Noche Buena* can have the Fiesta Ham Pineapple as main feature with potato wedges, mixed vegetables and sweet and sour sauce. Also available are Duck Liver Terrine, *Lechon de leche*, Roast Turkey with Cranberry Sauce and Chicken *Relleno* with Mixed Vegetables. Specialty breads include French Baguette, Raisin Walnut Banana Bread, and assorted loaf breads like Butter Cheese, Multi-grain, Fiber, Fruit and Nut, and Raisin Walnut Rye Bread.

Call Seven Corners at 6337222. Located along Ortigas Avenue, cor. ADB Avenue, Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila is a member of the Intercontinental Hotels group.

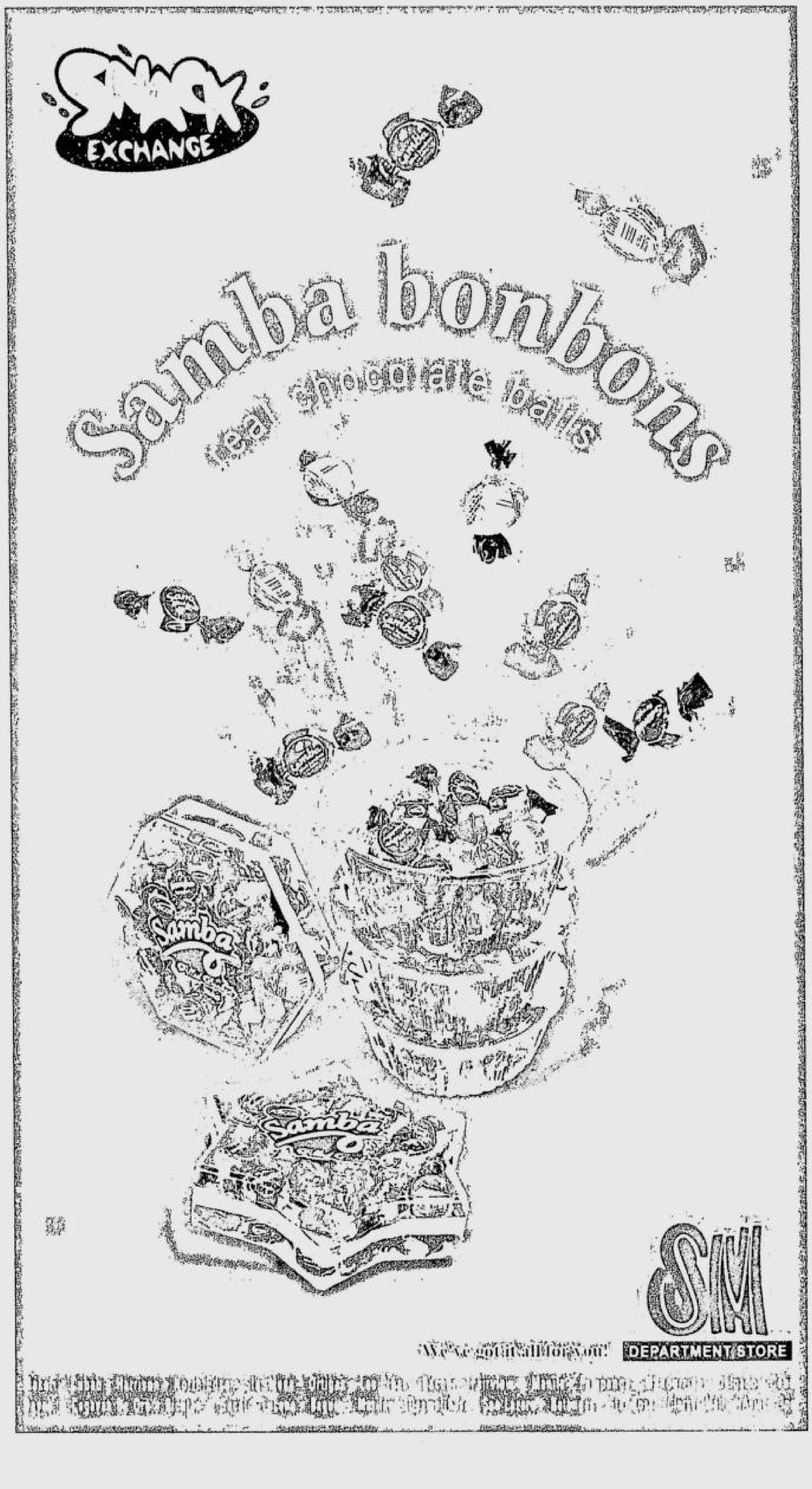
Christmas feast

THE SULO Hotel's Sushi Bar and Teppanyaki offers Christmas Family Feast set menus consisting of sashimi, mixed sushi, hot noodles, mixed tempura, two- or five-meal courses, miso soup and desserts. Call 9245051 to 71.


12-DAY BUFFET
THE BELLEVUE Hotel presents the 12 Days of Christmas Buffet until Dec. 25 at the Café d'Asie Restaurant. It will feature bestsellers like Australian Prime Rib, Osso Bucco, Singaporean Chili Crab, Spanish Seafood Stew, among others. Call 7718181.


TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS
DIAMOND Hotel features the Christmas Counter, which offers a wide selection of traditional Christmas dishes like Christmas Roasted US Turkey, Roasted Australian Prime Rib, Smoked Norwegian Salmon and Christmas Baked Ham. The Christmas Counter is open the whole month of December. Call 5283000 local 1118.

HOLIDAY TREAT
MANILA PAVILION offers *bibingka* (P180+) and *puto bumbong* (P130+) 2-9 p.m. at the hotel's Patisserie. Call 5261212 local 2326.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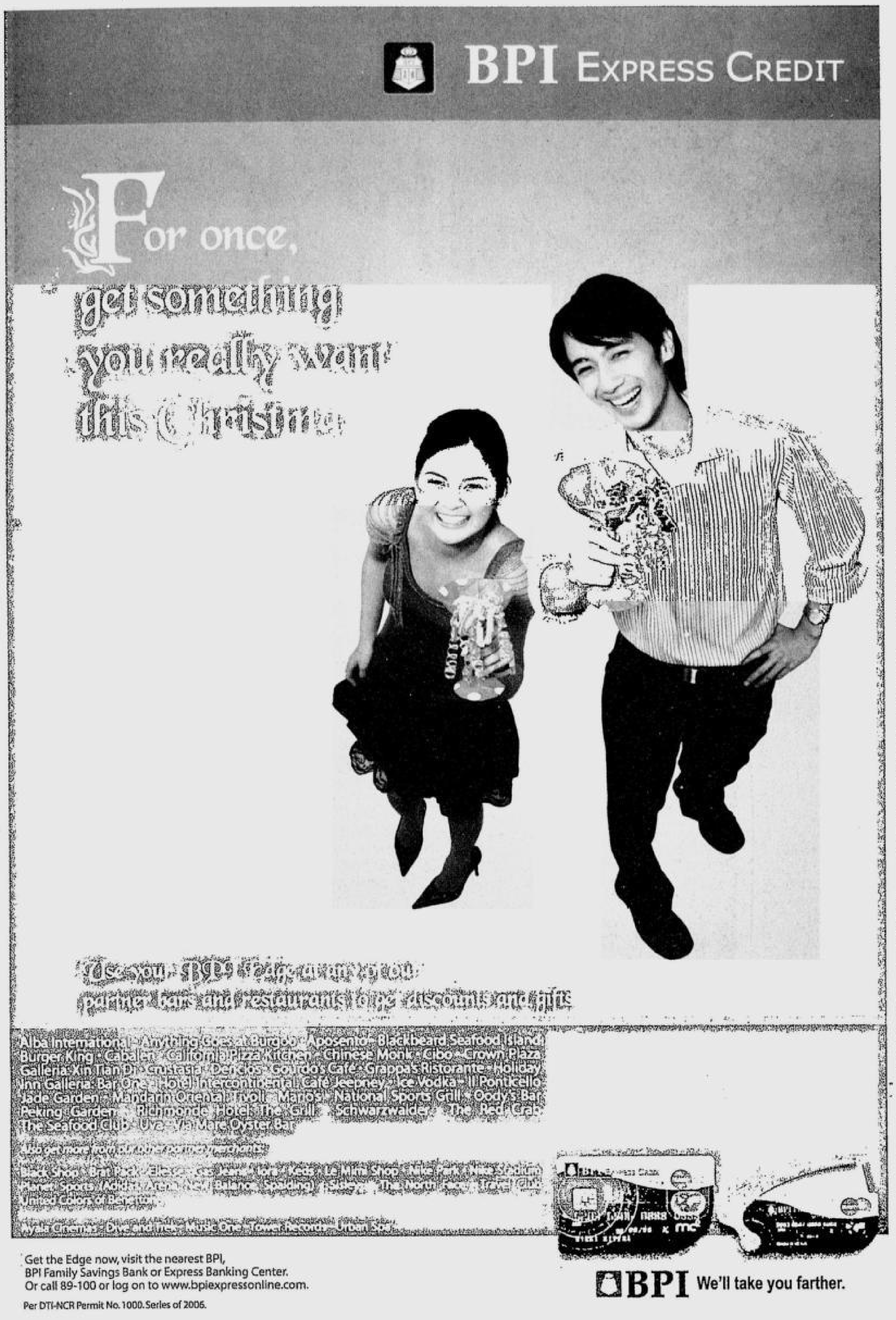
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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 1000. Series of 2006.

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KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

Give us this day

Its origin remains unknown, but, like a chain letter, you cannot refuse the Hemin bread once it is given to you

IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL time of the year, when people are happier to give than to receive. And those fortunate enough may even partake of Hemin, a piece of bread to break with his or her brethren.

Hemin is the holy bread of Padre Pio. It is not Christmas bread nor is it bread given only at Christmas time. The symbolic gesture that comes with the multiplication and sharing of Hemin, though, makes one feel like it is.

Hemin is not bought. Instead, one must wait to be given. It comes with instructions that read:

"The bread is called Hemin. It is the bread of Padre Pio and it comes from the Vatican. It brings blessings to every family who eats it. On the 10th day, you must give it to other good people."

ST. PADRE Pio

PHOTO COURTESY OF MAIOLICHESHOP

Remember: You cannot refuse the bread once it is given to you and you can only use a wooden spoon.

What to do

Once you receive the dough, put it in a large glass bowl. It must be covered with either wax paper or plastic wrap. Put it on the table counter at room temperature. Do not refrigerate.

First and second day: Do not touch the dough. It must adapt and absorb to its surroundings and take in the atmosphere. This is what makes each batch unique, from family to family.

Third and fourth day: Mix the dough with a wooden spoon, once per day.

Fifth day: Add 1 c milk, 2 c flour and 1 c sugar. Mix well with wooden spoon.

Sixth to ninth day: Mix with wooden spoon, once per day.

Tenth day: Add 1 c milk, 2 c flour and 1 c sugar. Mix very well with wooden spoon. Separate the dough into four equal portions. You give three of these portions to different people.

You keep the fourth batch of dough. To the dough you keep, add ¼ c sugar, three eggs, ½ c oil and 2 tsp baking powder. Mix well with wooden spoon. Put on a greased loaf pan. Bake at 350°F for 30 minutes.

Remember: You are only allowed to make Hemin bread once in your lifetime."

Puzzled? Read on.

The myth of the bread has been debunked. People say that Hemin is actually Amish Friendship bread that became popular in the '70s, a baker's chain letter if you would. Unlike chain letters though, it wishes no one harm.

So what is Hemin?

"Hemin" is the Greek word for "bread" used in the Our Father.

What one receives is actually yeast culture, also known as a starter. Your favorite Boudin sourdough bread in San Francisco starts off this way. A scant portion of the starter is used to flavor a fresh batch of dough to make into bread.

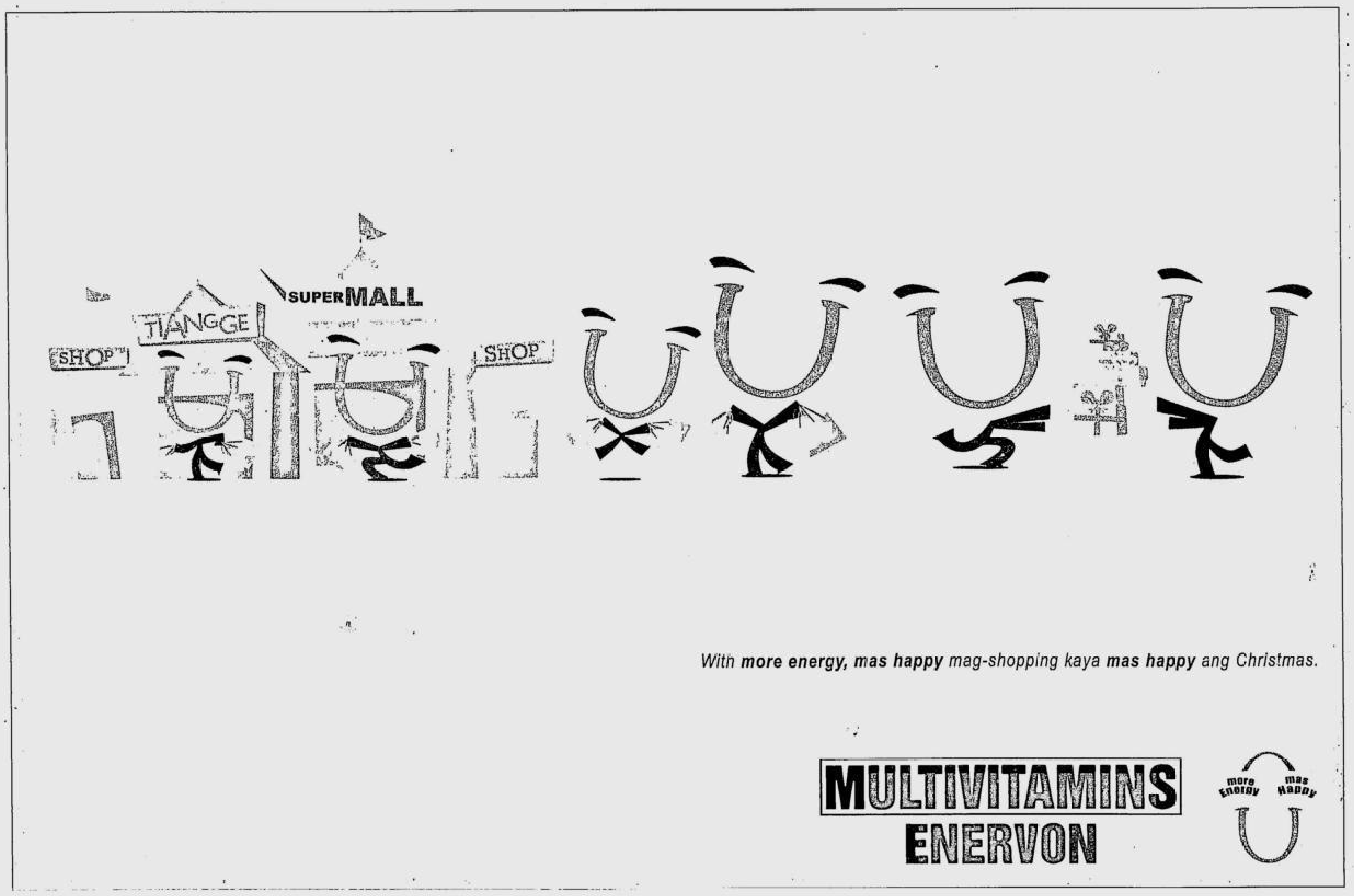
Bakers care for starters like pets. A starter mix consists of flour and water. Over time the flour breaks down into sugar from which wild yeast in the air feed. Thus the line in the instructions: "It must adapt and absorb to its surroundings and take in the atmosphere." A cup of starter, when properly fed and nurtured, quadruples in time.

Many existing sourdough cultures are bequeathals from generations past. It is the oldest way of making leavened bread, practiced way before commercial yeast was available, dating back to ancient Egypt.

Hemin origin

There seems to be no proof that it is from the Vatican. Its origin remains unknown. Some church officials have warned against this practice, calling it spiritual fallacy adding that there is no recommendation from Rome or Padre Pio's monastery, San Giovanni Rotundo. Fr. Jerry

GIVE/ C2



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CUILLÈRE'S elegant table setting with fresh flowers, ivory china and fine dinnerware

Spoonfuls of good cooking

FLOURLESS Chocolate Cake

By Vangie Baga-Reyes

ONE WAS THE BRIDE AND the other was the flower girl. Now, after two decades, the then bride Arlene Canilao-Arce and her erstwhile flower girl who is now a chef, Katrina Arce Kuhn, are partners in a thriving three-year-old catering business called Cuillère.

The partnership is quite unique and complementary. Canilao-Arce, 48, who is married to Kuhn's uncle Rudy Arce (his family is behind the popular ice cream bearing their name) and is amused by the turn of events, had no formal culinary training. But she is adept in cooking, having grown up in a family of good cooks.

Late bloomer

Kuhn, 27, who describes herself as a late bloomer, did not do any cooking while growing up. Later, however, she decided she wanted to learn food preparation and enrolled at Le Cordon Bleu Culinary School in Paris.

"We complement each other," says Kuhn. "My aunt was catering for small groups of friends, but when we got together, I professionalized the service and the food."

Canilao-Arce is good at public relations and marketing, while Kuhn, who is shy, runs the kitchen and trains the staff.

"We may have different attitudes, but we have the same values and outlook when it comes to our business. We're both hardworking. We both know what we want to achieve and we are willing to do everything to make it work. We have no board meeting. We just talk about work casually. That's why we click," Kuhn says.

The chef finished international business at Assumption College, worked for a year in the family ice cream business, then flew to Paris.

Before coming home, Kuhn, who is half-Swiss, worked in prestigious restaurants in France, such as La Maison Blanche, Avenue Montaigne, Paris; La Caravelle Hotel and Restaurant, Corsica; and the two-Michelin star Restaurant Issautier, Nice.

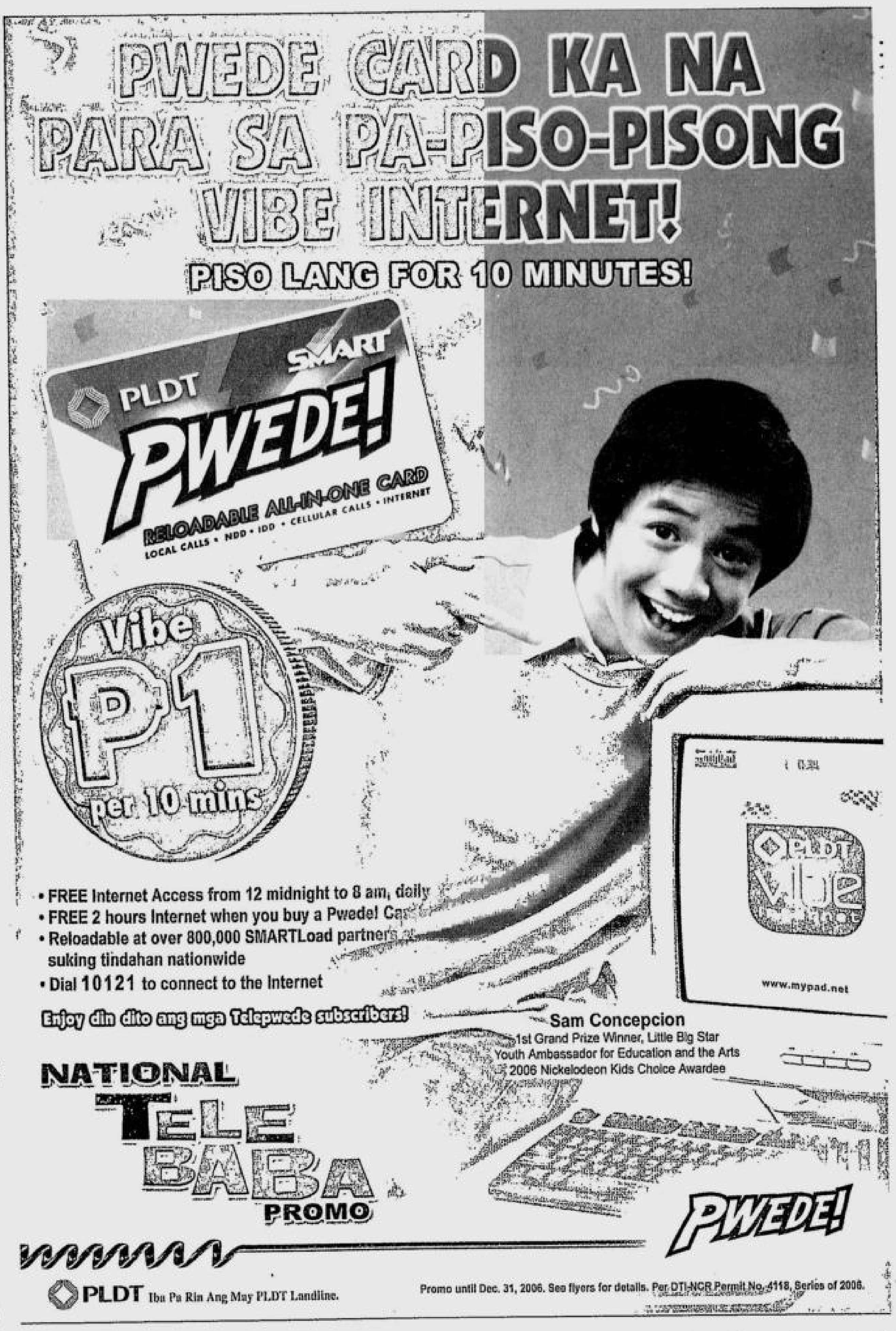
"I have always been interested in the food business. Maybe it's in the blood. We used to have a restaurant," Kuhn says.

The restaurant was actually a chain in the '60s called Selecta started by Ramon and Carmen Arce. Later on, the brand Selecta was sold to the Concepcions and the restaurants that had become familiar landmarks on Dewey Boulevard (now Roxas Boulevard) and Azcar-

SPOONFULS/ D2

> Cuillère attributes its growing loyal clientele to the consistency of its food, quality of service and good customer relations

FRESH oysters served on spoon, drizzled with vermouth and topped with caviar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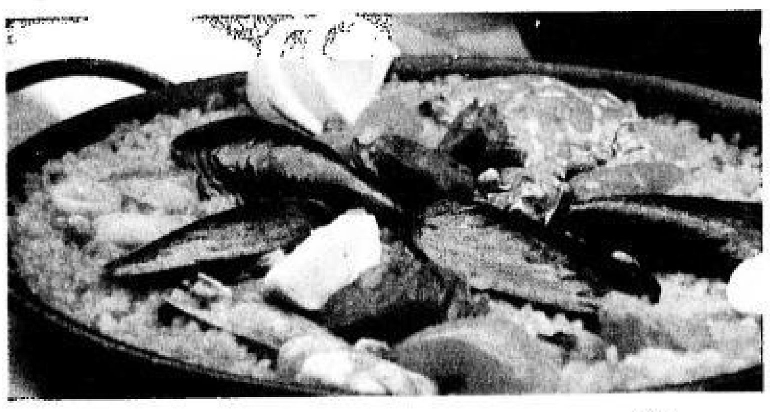


SEAFOOD Paella

GYUNIKU with sautéed bean sprouts

Spoonfuls of good cooking

From page D1

raga (CM Recto), Manila, were closed.

But Ramon's youngest son, Mauro, Kuhn's grandfather, kept the ice cream factory and gave it a new name, Arce Dairy.

"I grew up exposed to the business, so I knew I'd be involved in food. I did catering because my aunt already had one foot in. We just had to strengthen it," says Kuhn.

New and old

Cuillère (pronounced kweyer) is French for spoon. The aunt-and-niece team likes the affluence and elegance associated with the word, as in "born with a silver spoon."

Cuillère specializes in European and Asian cuisine. Its Eurasian menu features dishes from different cultures including French, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and Filipino.

A menu sampler may begin with onion soup, foie gras and bacalao croquettes. Main course may be seafood paella, or sea bass en papillote with dill mayonnaise. There may be a tempura bar and roast beef carving station.

Capping the meal may be crème brulée, liquid-centered chocolate cake; a tray of pastry selections, and the unique flavors of Arce dairy ice cream. There may also be a *halo-halo* bar.

Kuhn and Canilao-Arce prepare their food with meticulous care, using the best ingredients and right cooking techniques.

"Our cuisine is only half of the total party pleasure we deliver," says the aunt. "The other half comes from our commitment to create a beautiful banquet setting for the occasion and the way we serve (the food)."

Cuillère prepares elegant table settings using *capiz* plate chargers, ivory china, fine dinnerware, lovely crystals and dainty linen. Charming floral arrangements complete the setup.

The company has catered for embassies, private corporations, government offices and nongovernment organizations, from private parties of 12 to a huge gathering of 2,030.

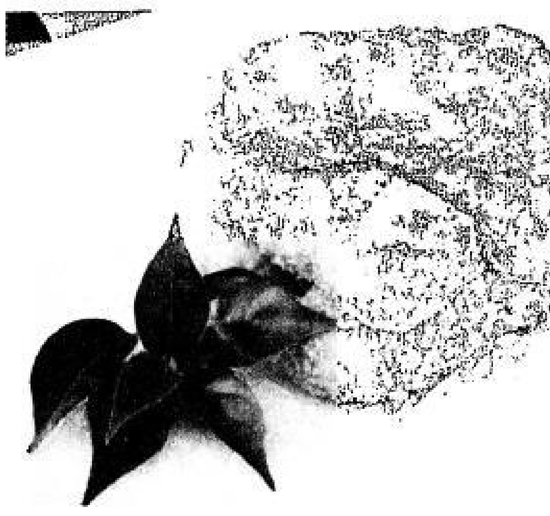
In August, Cuillère catered a party for Andrea Pierre Casiraghi, son of Princess Caroline of Monaco, during his brief visit. Casiraghi tasted Filipino dishes, like *lumpiang ubod* and *adobo*.

"He said (the food) was good, but I don't know if he really meant it. He finished all the food on his plate though," Kuhn says.

CUILLÈRE'S aunt-and-niece team: Arlene Canilao-Arce and Katrina Arce Kuhn

PHOTOS BY ROGER CARPIO

ARCE Dairy ice cream, in various delicious flavors, caps the dining pleasure.



BACALAO Croquettes

Word of mouth

From catering only for friends and families, Cuillère grew as word about them spread. The partners admit they get new clients from the parties they cater.

"We haven't had a party where we didn't get a single new client. Our clients become our friends and they spread the word about us," says Kuhn.

They attribute the loyalty of their clients to the consistency of their food, the quality of service and the good relations they maintain with customers.

The partners supervise the whole process from food preparation, cooking and setup in the venue. One of them is at the venue to oversee the whole production.

Despite the stress, Kuhn and Canilao-Arce are not complaining.

"You get a certain high when you're on the line," Kuhn explains. "When you have to do 10 things at the same time... making sure everything is as hot or as cold as it should be.... We enjoy that kind of stress.

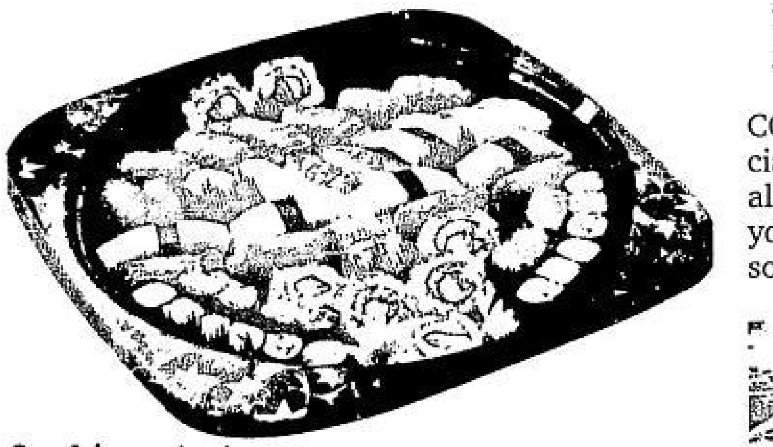
"Catering is organizing so many things at the same time. But there's satisfaction when everything comes together. Everybody enjoys it. People go out of their way to thank you because they appreciate what you do for them."

Cuillère is at 102 Selecta Drive, A. Bonifacio, Balintawak, QC; tels. 3644684 and 3633795; mobile 0917-8962328.

E-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph.

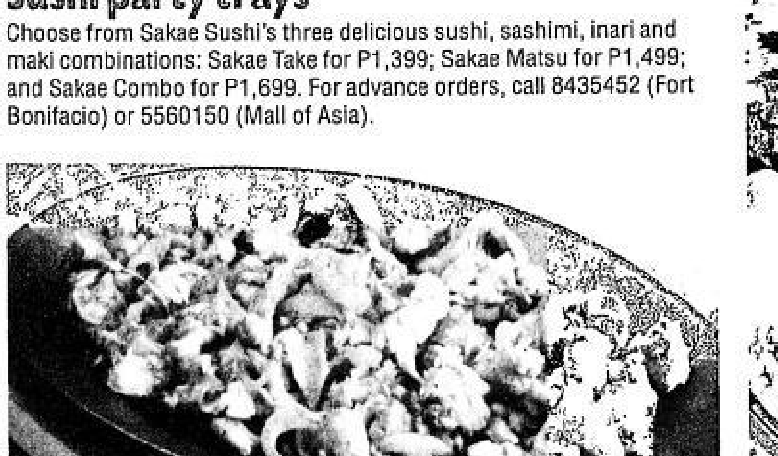
Easy-does-it holiday hosting

COOKING CAN BE A MAJOR CHORE DURING THE HOLIDAYS, ESPECIALLY if you're hosting the family reunion. But why hole up in the kitchen all day when you can have the convenience of having food delivered to your home? Grab the phone, put up your feet, dial up and get ready for some sweat-free feasting. Have yourself a truly merry Christmas.



Sushi party trays

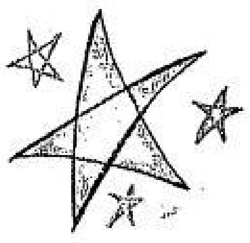
Choose from Sakae Sushi's three delicious sushi, sashimi, inari and maki combinations: Sakae Take for P1,399; Sakae Matsu for P1,499; and Sakae Combo for P1,699. For advance orders, call 8435452 (Fort Bonifacio) or 5560150 (Mall of Asia).

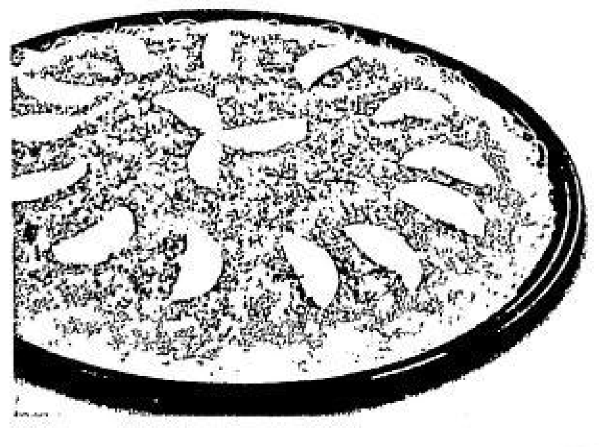


'Barkada' packages

Dencio's is offering Barkada Christmas packages to make holiday partying easier on the pocket. Filipino dishes are bundled in four set menus available in half (good for five persons) and whole (good for 10 persons) sets. All meals are served with a plate of Sisig (in photo), plain rice, and a pitcher of iced tea or lemonade. Set Menu A (P220 per person) includes Kangkong at Bagoong, Sinigang na Baboy, Sizzling Chicken a la Gambas, and Nilasing na Hipon sa Taba ng Talangka. Set Menu B (P230 each) has Pinakbet, Molo soup, Pancit Dencio's, and Pork Barbecue. Set Menu C (P240 each) has Chopsuey, Kare-kare, Chicken Barbecue, and Sizzling Tiyan ng Bangus. Set Menu D (P240 each) has Ensaladang Mangga, Kare-kareng Gulay, Sizzling Bangus, and Inihaw na Liempo. A package for 20 is available for as low as P4,400. Visit www.dencios.biz.

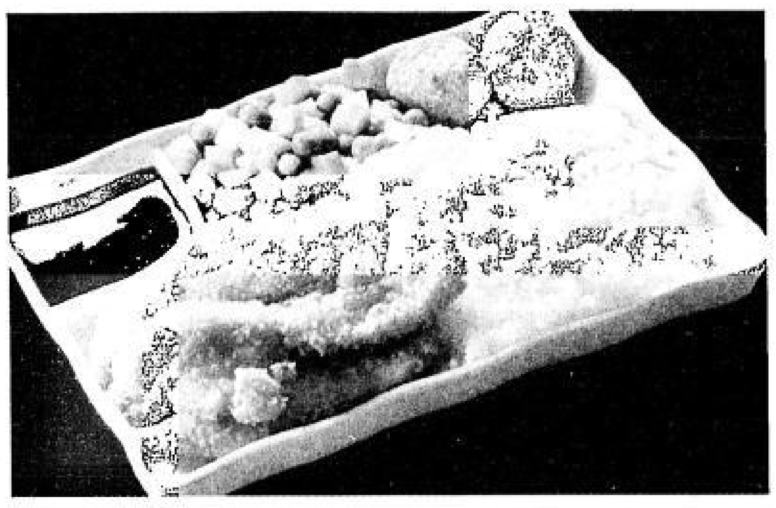
CHEF Eli of Aurelio's Catering offers US Roast Turkey with choice of stuffing, Honey Baked Virginia Ham, Cuchinillo Roast Suckling Pig, Spanish Seafood Paella and Roast Black Angus Rib Eye. Call 7267321/7269329/7217952/0920-9201883.





Platters-to-go

Red Ribbon has Platters-To-Go for hassle-free Christmas celebration with friends, co-workers or family. Freshly made and packed in re-usable and hygienic containers, the platters feature three different pasta dishes—Palabok, Spaghetti and Creamy Carbonara. They are available in three different sizes: Family (4-6 people), Potluck (6-9), and Party (8-12). Red Ribbon now also offers Cheesy Lasagna in microwaveable packs good for six persons. Call 7477777.



Six party menus

Fast-food chain Karate Kid is offering party packages for corporate and family Christmas parties. It has six different menus that are easy on the budget. Photo shows Chicken Kickers served with rice, potato balls and side servings of mixed veggies and a special sauce, all for P70 per head. Bottomless drink and "rice all you can" is available for an additional minimum of P10 per head. Dessert may also be added for a fee. Party packages are available for a minimum of 30 people. For orders exceeding P5,000, Karate Kid offers 3-percent gift certificate rebates. Call 5368060/4190805.

For four or more

Chateau 1771 helps you enjoy the holidays with the "Chateau at Your Table" yuletide menu for office and family parties of four or more. Choose from Pasta Chorizo, Vegetable Lasagna and Salmon Lasagna. Poultry entrees include Lemon Chicken, Hunter's Chicken, Baked Chicken and Roast Turkey. Or order Chateau's specialties Beef Osso Bucco, Roast of Crown Pork, Roasted Salmon and Seafood Jambalaya. For dessert, try the Cheesecake, Coffee Pie, Crepe Bar or Crème Brulee. Place your orders two days before the party at 6317340/41, or text 0917-8660442. Log on to chateaurestaurants@yahoo.com.ph. Chateau 1771 also has function and catering packages. Call 6317339.

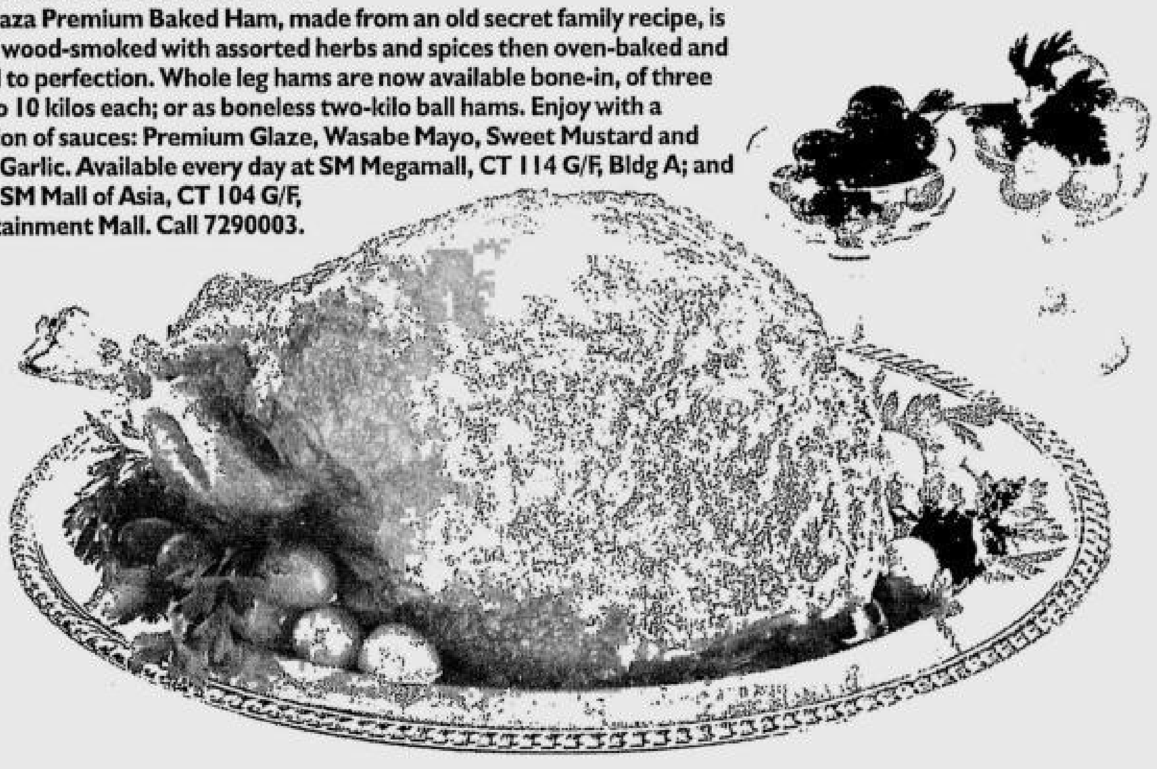
It's gotta be
Shakey's

A shakin' & merry holiday

By all means order for yourself but you can also send glad tidings to your friends and family by ordering their favorite pizza from Shakey's. For a minimum purchase of P300, you can send a Shakey's pizza in Christmas-themed packaging anywhere in Metro Manila and selected provinces while the "Pizza Express Padala" promo is on. Short of cash? You can still have a part with Shakey's first-of-its-kind "Pizza Now, Pay Later" scheme that lets you charge your orders to major credit and debit cards through the Philippine Long Distance Telephone company's SWUP (Shops Work UnPlugged). Your purchase will be reflected in your next billing statement. Dial 77777 for delivery. Remember, if it's late, it's free!

THE TASTE OF CHRISTMAS

The Plaza Premium Baked Ham, made from an old secret family recipe, is lightly wood-smoked with assorted herbs and spices then oven-baked and glazed to perfection. Whole leg hams are now available bone-in, of three kilos to 10 kilos each; or as boneless two-kilo ball hams. Enjoy with a selection of sauces: Premium Glaze, Wasabe Mayo, Sweet Mustard and Gutsy Garlic. Available every day at SM Megamall, CT 114 G/F, Bldg A; and at the SM Mall of Asia, CT 104 G/F, Entertainment Mall. Call 7290003.



Nutty favorites

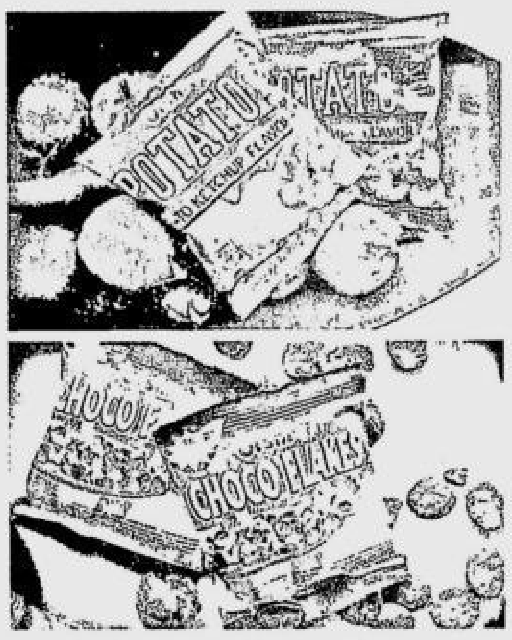
CHOCO MANI, WHICH HAS BECOME A FAvorite among children, undergoes production methods that follow the most stringent standards.

Candyline Food Manufacturing Corp. said each piece of Choco Mani was machine-packed in foil and then in semi-permeable plastic. Machine packing decreases human handling and chances for contamination.

Choco Mani coins are pillow-packed to make them more hygienic.

Available in coins or bars, Choco Mani is sold in leading groceries and supermarkets, as well as *sari-sari* stores and school canteens nationwide. Call 3646507 or 3604115, or e-mail MDC_mktg@hotmail.com.

CHOCO Mani bridges the generation gap as kids develop a taste for their parents' favorite peanut chocolate.



OISHI'S Potato Fries Ketchup Flavor and Choco Flakes cereals

Holiday snacking

NO NEED TO STARVE WHILE WAITING FOR the feasting to begin. Keep a bag or two of Oishi snacks handy.

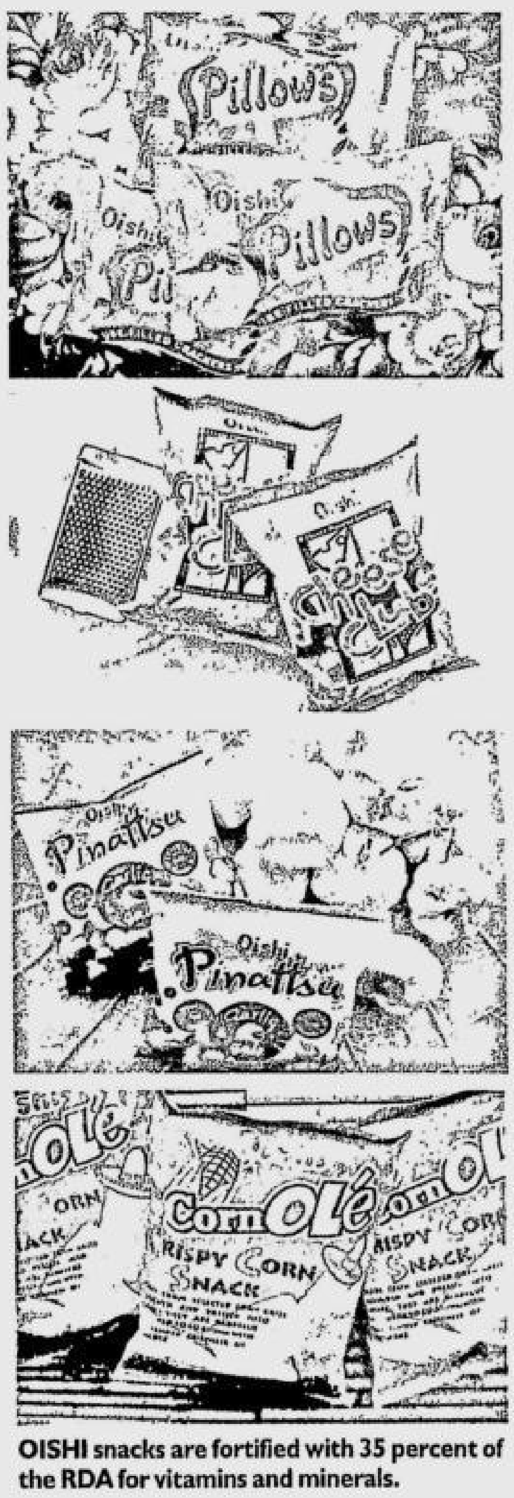
Oishi, Japanese for delicious, has Prawn Crackers or Kirei Yummy Flakes, the healthier Oheya Multi-Grain snacks, and the different cereals—Choco Flakes, Honey Crimpies and Fruity Rings. And they are all fortified with 35 percent of the RDA for vitamins and minerals.

You may also have a bag of Caramel or Chocolate Popcorn. Whether or not you drink beer, you may still enjoy munching on Oishi's Beer Match Snacks, Ribbed Cracklings or Potato Fries Ketchup Flavor.

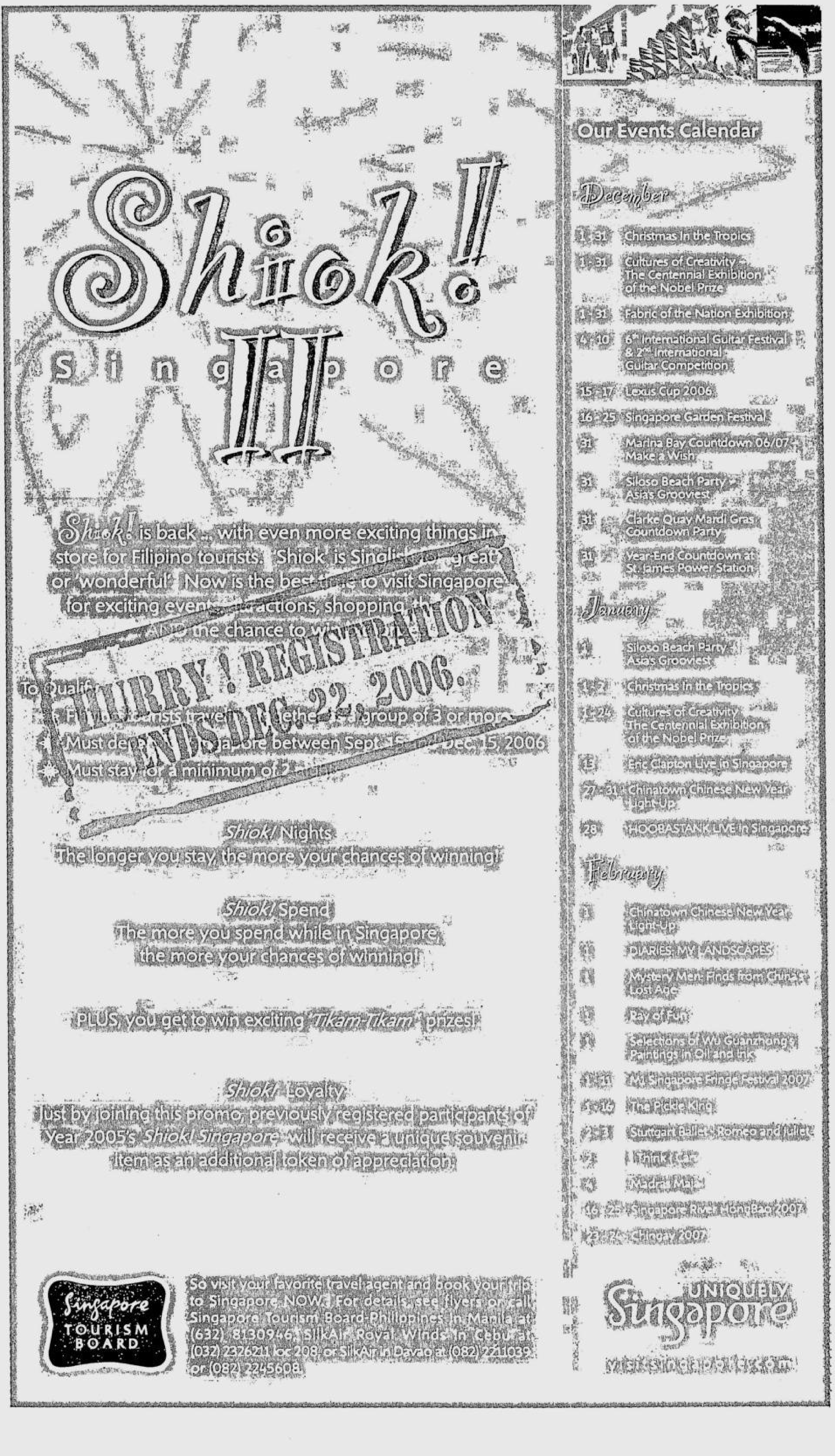
Complement them with Oishi powdered drinks Sundays and Sun Tea. Sundays comes in various fruit flavors like Dalandan, Orange Mango, Guava and Melon. Sun Tea, on the other hand, comes in Fuji Apple, Wild Strawberry and Citrus Twist.

If you get one of the happy-red Oishi Cuckoo bags, you also give P1 to Operation Smile Philippines which Oishi supports.

Oishi Cuckoo bags are available at groceries and supermarkets nationwide.



OISHI snacks are fortified with 35 percent of the RDA for vitamins and minerals.



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Our Events Calendar

December
1 - 31 Christmas In the Tropics
1 - 31 Cultures of Creativity - The Centennial Exhibition of the Nobel Prize
1 - 31 Fabric of the Nation Exhibition
4 - 10 6th International Guitar Festival & 2nd International Guitar Competition
15 - 17 Lexus Cup 2006
16 - 25 Singapore Garden Festival
31 Marina Bay Countdown 06/07 Make a Wish
31 Siloso Beach Party - Asia's Grooviest
31 Clarke Quay Mardi Gras Countdown Party
31 Year-End Countdown at St. James Power Station

January
1 Siloso Beach Party Asia's Grooviest
1 - 2 Christmas In the Tropics
1 - 24 Cultures of Creativity The Centennial Exhibition of the Nobel Prize
13 Eric Clapton Live in Singapore
27 - 31 Chinatown Chinese New Year Light-Up
28 HOOBASTANK LIVE in Singapore

February
1 Chinatown Chinese New Year Light-Up
1 DIARIES: MY LANDSCAPES
1 Mystery Men: Finds from China's Lost Age
1 Ray of Fun
1 Selections of Wu Guanzhong's Paintings in Oil and Ink
[illegible] - 11 M1 Singapore Fringe Festival 2007
[illegible] - 16 The Pickle King
[illegible] - 3 Stuttgart Ballet - Romeo and Juliet
[illegible] I Think [illegible]
[illegible] Madras Mail
16 - 25 Singapore River Hong Bao 2007
23 - 24 Chingay 2007

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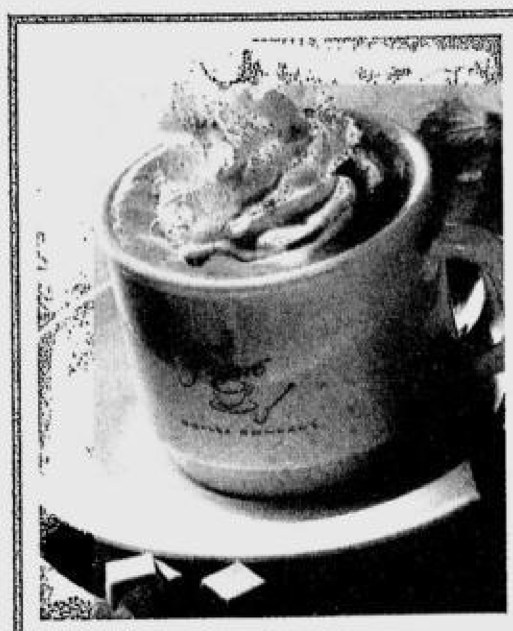
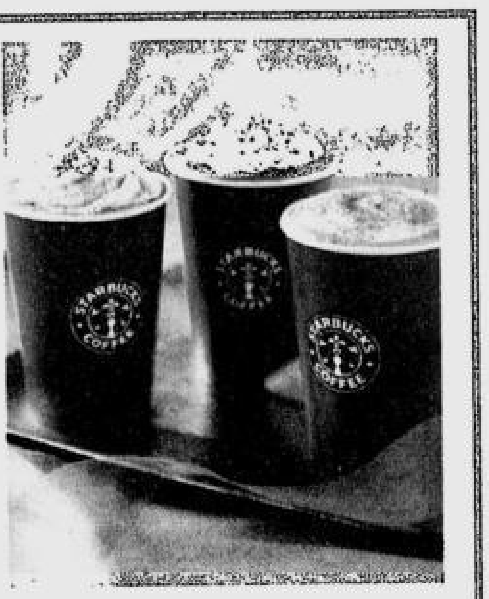


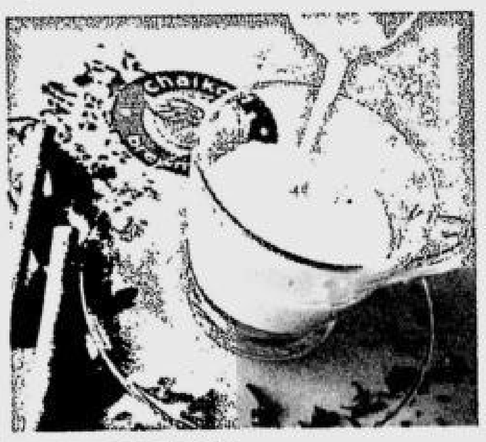
SOME LIKE IT HOT

Starbucks has introduced a line of decadent chocolate beverages with balanced bittersweet and milk chocolate flavor, topped with whipped cream, in three flavors: Signature, a rich hot chocolate made with Starbucks' new signature cocoa blend dusted with premium cocoa powder; Caramel, blended with sweet, rich caramel syrup and drizzled with buttery caramel sauce; and Hazelnut, blended with hazelnut syrup, and dusted with premium cocoa powder.



MAKE IT MINTY

Brace yourself for the holiday chill with Magnificent Mint Mocha, Figaro's hearty chocolate overture, underscored with a hint of mint and a dash of cinnamon. Taste the sheer smoothness with every sip at any of the more than 50 Figaro outlets.



GOOD FOR YOU

Take a break from holiday shopping with Fete de Frappe, a serving of ice blended Chaikofi coffee beverage with syrups, or enjoy a cup of any of Chaikofi's fine tea and coffee brought in from various parts of the world. The green tea is organically produced from its own farm in the Yunnan province. Chaikofi uses stevia, which is a non-caloric herb grown in Paraguay, as sweetener in all its beverages. Chaikofi is located at the north wing of the SM Mall of Asia.

85 CHOICE FLAVORS

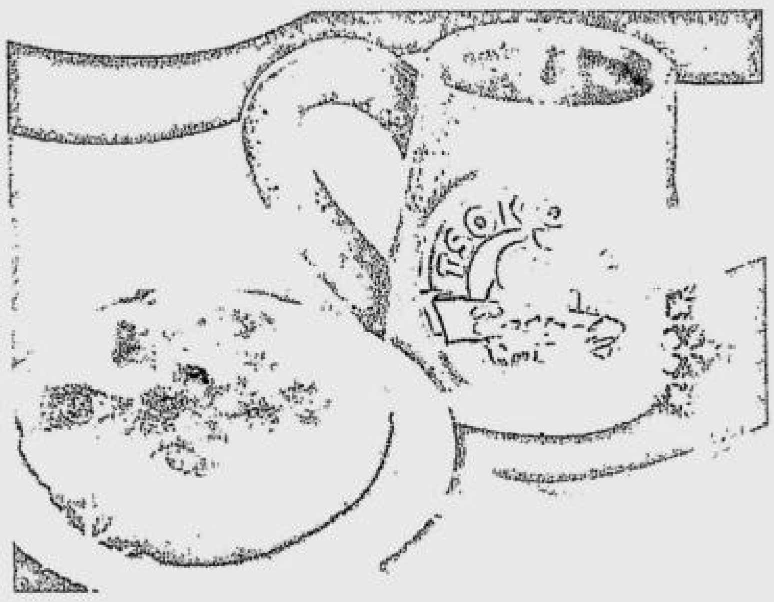
Authentic Belgian chocolate brand Leonidas has opened a chocolate room at the Podium and Mall of Asia. It offers, among others, its signature iced blended chocolate drink Javalanche in velvety dark, creamy milk and raspberry white. Also offered is chocolate fondue. So now you can not only munch on chocolates, you can sip or dip, too. Leonidas has more than 85 flavors including pralines, truffles and sugar-free, available in dark, milk and white chocolate, as well as alcohol or non-alcohol variations. Leonidas chocolates are all freshly flown in, sold by weight and shoppers should check out the fancy luxury boxes of all sizes that fit everyone's budget range. Other outlets are located in Glorietta and Alabang Town Center. Call 7122555, 0917-8032506 or 0922-8898988.

Bling up the bottle

This holiday season, Absolut Vodka blings up the celebration by dressing up its bottles in gold. Apart from the new packaging and accompanying advertising, the campaign presents a number of specially developed Absolut Vodka cocktail recipes, available on absolut-drinks.com. The limited edition gold Absolut gift pack is sold at select retail outlets and Duty Free Philippines.

Whisky whiz

So you want to impress the boss? If he likes a stiff drink every now and then, serve any of Johnnie Walker's award-winning labels. At the 37th International Wine and Spirits Competition, Johnnie Walker Green Label got a gold medal as Best in Class in the Scotch Whisky-Blended Malt 14-15-Year-Old category. The Red Label won silver, as did the Black, Gold and Blue Labels. No doubt these awards have made Diageo, the world's leading spirits, beer and wine company, proud. In addition to Johnnie Walker, Diageo carries Smirnoff, J&B, Baileys, Cuervo, and Tanqueray, among others.



NEW HOLIDAY MENU

Tsoko Nut Batirol has a new menu for the holidays. Try the traditional ham with rice for P130; *tsokolate batirol-bibingka* combo, P128; cookies n cream n coffee, P95; and iced banana *batirol*, P95. Tsoko Nut Batirol branches are at SM Makati, WalterMart Makati, South Supermart-Alabang and at De la Rosa Carpark. Photo shows Tsokolate Batirol Bibingka-Combo.

Experience complete convenience, optimal productivity and integrated communications with the HP Officejet 4355 All-in-One. And that's not all, every purchase comes with free Adidas items. Now get HP reliability together with Adidas, an established brand in sports apparel. Promotion period is from September 29 to December 31, 2006.

P6,990 HP OFFICEJET 4355 ALL-IN-ONE
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P3,990 HP DESKJET D4160 PRINTER
- Enjoy fast printing speeds up to 30ppm black and 23ppm colour
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- Print laser-quality documents, vibrant photos, brochures, projects and more
- One-touch Photosmart Express button

P8,690 HP BUSINESS INKJET 1000 PRINTER
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- 4 individual inks and long life printheads
- Up to 4800 x 1200 optimised dpi colour printing
- Optional automatic 2 sided printing accessory / external jetdirect for networking (accessories not included)

P17,290 HP DESKJET 460cb MOBILE PRINTER
- Full featured mobile printer that delivers optional wi-fi and bluetooth wireless connectivity
- High quality printing at up to 17 ppm black and 16 ppm colour
- Up to 4800 dpi optimised dpi colour
- Duty cycle : up to 500 pages per month

P10,190 HP OFFICEJET 5610 ALL-IN-ONE
- Printer, scanner, copier, fax
- Up to 4800-optimised dpi colour printing and laser quality text
- Print and copy at up to 20 ppm (black) or 13ppm (colour)
- HP Photoret 3 / HP Photoret 4 (with optional 6-ink colour printing)
- 2-line text LCD screen
- Scan up to 1200 x 2400 dpi optical resolution / 48 bit
- 25-page ADF and fax

P19,590 HP OFFICEJET 7210 ALL-IN-ONE
- Printer, scanner, copier, fax
- Up to 4800-optimised dpi colour printing
- Print and copy at up to 30 ppm (black) or 20ppm (colour)
- Pictbridge compatibility
- HP Photoret 3 / HP Photoret 4 (with optional 6-ink colour printing)
- Memory card capability
- Scan up to 2400 x 4800 dpi optical resolution / 48 bit
- 50 page ADF and fax
- Built in networking (802.3 ethernet network capability)

P11,590 HP PHOTOSMART C5180 ALL-IN-ONE
- HP's high-performance photo all-in-one with built in Ethernet networking, 6 individual inks plus one touch buttons
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- Print and copy at up to 32 ppm (black) or 31ppm (colour)
- Scanning at 2400 x 4800-dpi optical resolution, 48-bit color

Promotion Mechanics:
Buy any of the participating HP printers from September 29 to December 31,2006 and receive a FREE Adidas item.
For printers with FREE Adidas Cap*, the free item is bundled direcly on the box. For other printers, follow the instructions to claim your FREE Adidas Bag**.
Claim your free Adidas Bag by sending the following via fax or email to Yeaps Corporation c/o Mr. Janssen Calma:
a. Sales invoice/Official receipt.
b. Cut out printer serial number sticker.
c. Cut out promotion sticker (all required information should be completely filled up).
d. Valid ID.
A customer representative will call to inform you of your confirmation receipt number and advise you of the arrangements in claiming of premium item. Surrender the promotion sticker, cut out serial number and photocopy of the invoice upon claiming of the Adidas Bag.
Redemption of free item valid until February 28,2007.
Agency contact info
Tel no.: 7532558
Fax no.: 8451634
Office Address: 2306 Herrera Tower, Rufino corner Valero St. Salcedo Village Makati City
Email address: hp_synergy@yeaps.com

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4377, Series of 2006.

See flyers and posters for details.

* Free Adidas Cap - HP Photosmart C3180 All-in-One, HP Deskjet D4160 Printer, HP Photosmart A516 Compact Photo Printer
** Free Adidas Bag - HP Photosmart 7830/8230/D7160 Printer, HP Photosmart C4180/C5180/3110 All-in-One, HP Officejet 4355/5610/7210 All-in-One, HP Deskjet 5160 Color Inkjet Printer, HP Deskjet 460cb Mobile Printer, HP Business Inkjet 1000 Printer
*** Bag designs are subject to availability

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The undiscovered, divine Binallay

THE AUTHOR

(For this year's Doreen Gamboa Fernandez Food Writing Awards, now on its fifth year, the subject was kakanin, the generic name for native cakes whether made from grain [rice, millet, corn], rootcrops or fruit.

The three top placers and three runners-up were recently honored and received their trophies as well as prizes in cash and products. However, some of the essays that didn't make it to the Magic 6 will be included in a book on kakanin to be launched next year.

The essay written and submitted by Rodessa Dauigoy-Lachica, a chief of staff at the House of Representatives, got this year's top award. The author says she plans to retire in her hometown where the Ibanag rice cake and its accompanying laro or syrup was once served only during Lent.)

By Rodessa Dauigoy-Lachica

FROM BATANES to Tawi-Tawi, Ligas Point to Pusan Point, no rice concoction is allowed to play a role so perfect and inspired during the season of Lent than the undiscovered, unforgettable and unmistakably Ibanag delicacy called Binallay con Laro.

In fact, nowhere on the archipelago can be found a people so content with themselves and comfortable in their traditions that they actually smile at the advent of the meatless week, but in Isabela, a top rice-growing province in northern Luzon.

A minority population, the Ibanags are found mostly in the provincial capital of Ilagan, as well as the towns of Sta. Maria, Cabagan and San Pablo.

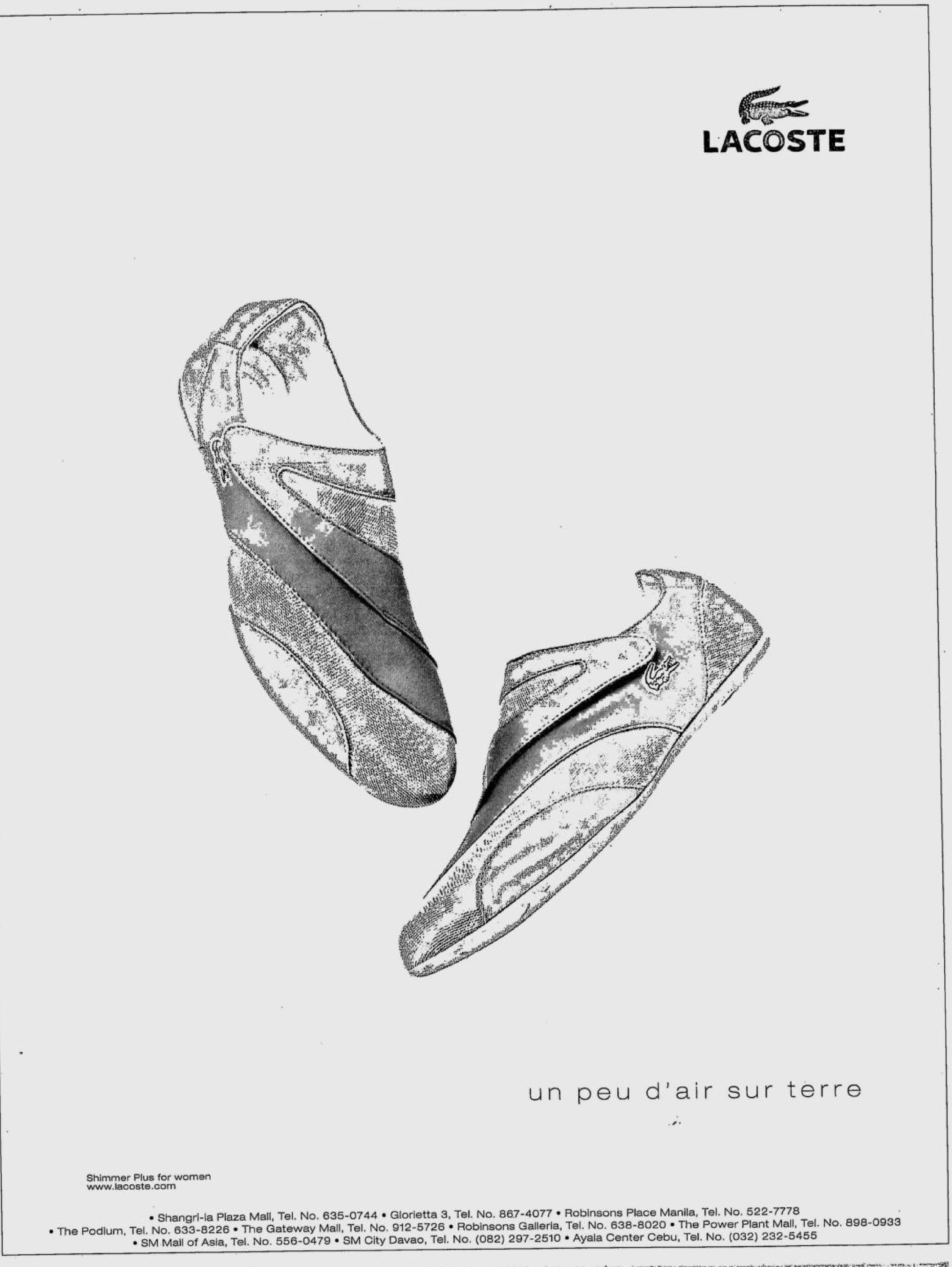
They who have yet to land in the headlines like their Ilokano kin, are as much one of the North's best-kept secrets as the Binallay (*bee-NAHL-lay*) they have held in reserve for almost a century.

Binallay is a much-awaited once-a-year fare, the center of attraction and staple on the Ibanag dining table during the annual season of fasting and abstinence. It might as well be called the Divine Delicacy because it partners with *laro*, a sweet and syrupy dark red dip symbolizing "the body & blood" of Jesus that makes dining during Lent a reminder of Jesus Christ's brave and generous offering. The recipe also represents the sense of sacrifice and reflection, creativity and strong spirit of community that bind Ibanags during Eastertide.

The tedium of its process has turned Binallay-making into a Lenten devotion for senior Ibanags who hope the task and its significance will spill over to succeeding generations.

With rice abundant in their valley, Ibanags concocted Binallay, a name with no clear origins. A long-held belief is that it must be a

THE UNDISCOVERED/ E4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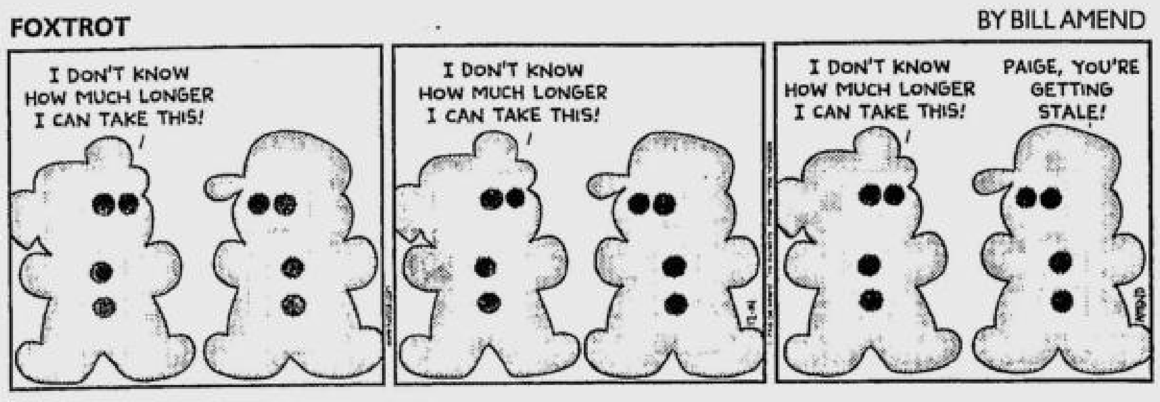
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2006

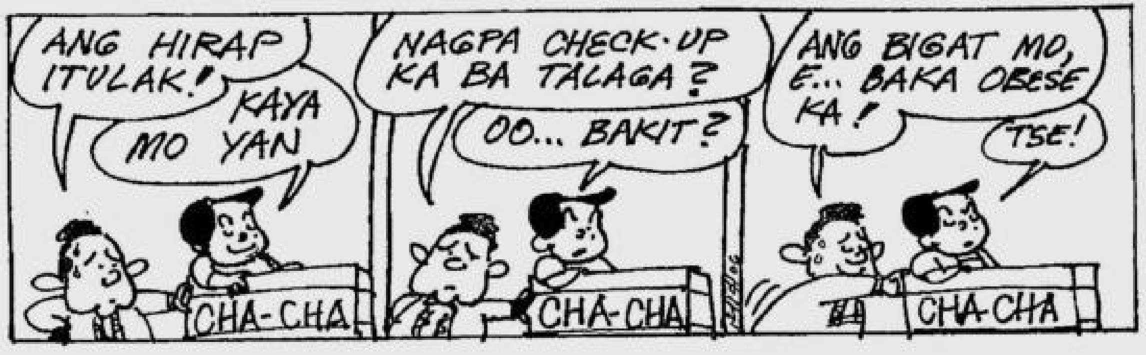
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN TAKE THIS!
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN TAKE THIS!
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN TAKE THIS!
PAIGE, YOU'RE GETTING STALE!

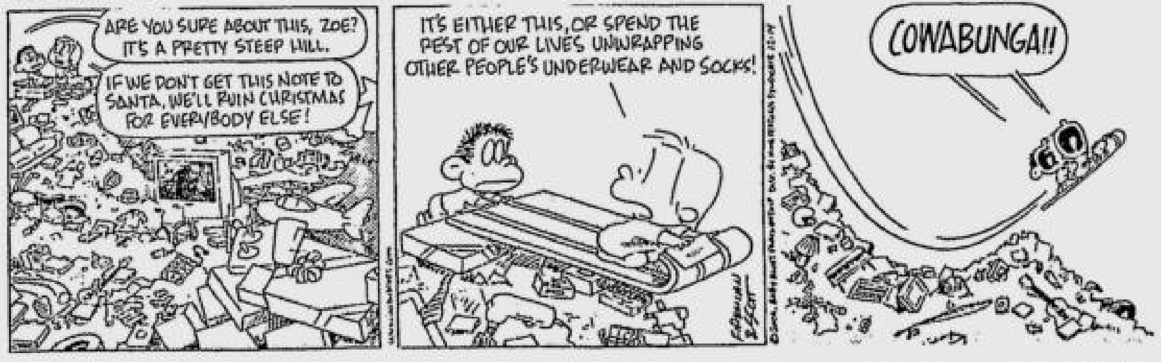
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ANG HIRAP ITULAK!
KAYA MO YAN
CHA-CHA
NAGPA CHECK-UP KA BA TALAGA?
OO... BAKIT?
CHA-CHA
ANG BIGAT MO, E... BAKA OBESE KA!
TSE!
CHA-CHA

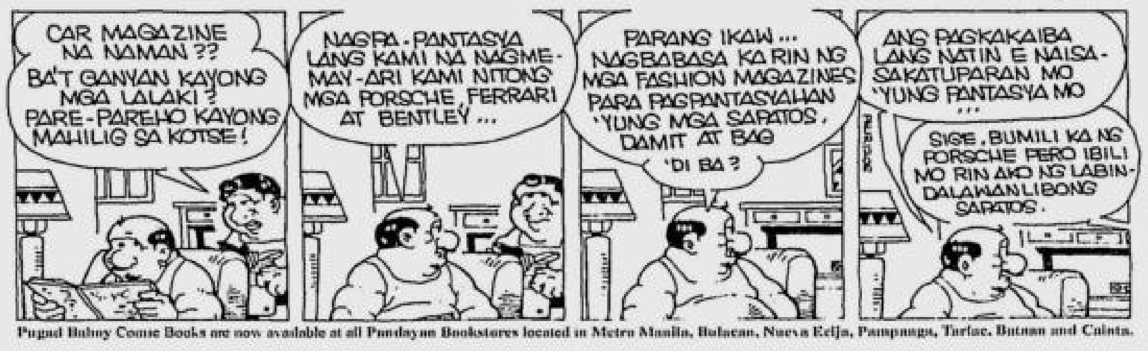
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, ZOE? IT'S A PRETTY STEEP HILL.
IF WE DON'T GET THIS NOTE TO SANTA, WE'LL RUIN CHRISTMAS FOR EVERYBODY ELSE!
IT'S EITHER THIS, OR SPEND THE REST OF OUR LIVES UNWRAPPING OTHER PEOPLE'S UNDERWEAR AND SOCKS!
COWABUNGA!!

PUGAD BABOY

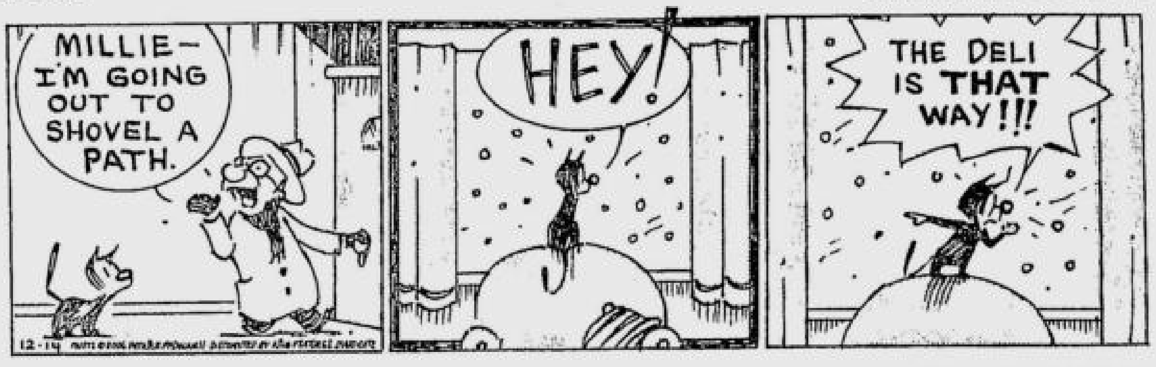
BY P.M. JUNIOR


CAR MAGAZINE NA NAMAN ??
BA'T GANYAN KAYONG MGA LALAKI? PARE-PAREHO KAYONG MAHILIG SA KOTSE!
NAGPA-PANTASYA LANG KAMI NA NAGME-MAY-ARI KAMI NITONG MGA PORSCHE, FERRARI AT BENTLEY...
PARANG IKAW... NAGBABASA KA RIN NG MGA FASHION MAGAZINES PARA PAGPANTASYAHAN 'YUNG MGA SAPATOS, DAMIT AT BAG
'DI BA?
ANG PAGKAKAIBA LANG NATIN E NAISA-SAKATUPARAN MO 'YUNG PANTASYA MO ...
SIGE, BUMILI KA NG PORSCHE PERO IBILI MO RIN AKO NG LABIN-DALAWANLIBONG SAPATOS.

Pugad Baboy Comic Books are now available at all Pandayan Bookstores located in Metro Manila, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, Bataan and Cainta.

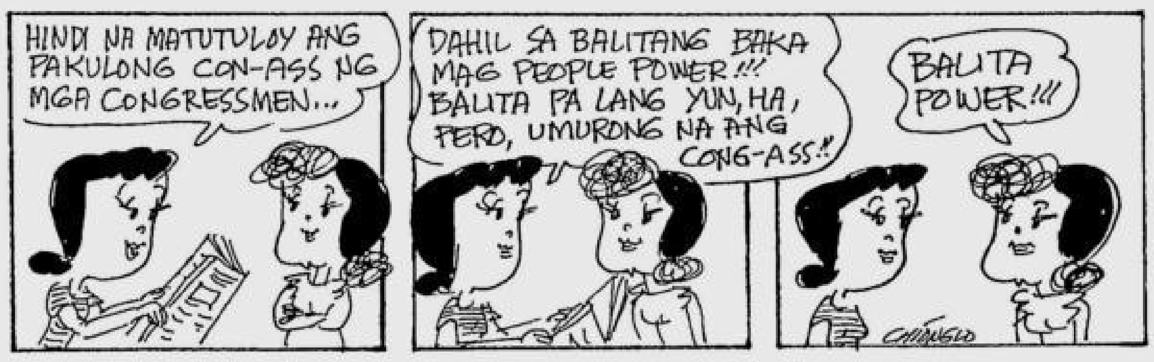
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


MILLIE— I'M GOING OUT TO SHOVEL A PATH.
HEY!
THE DELI IS THAT WAY!!!
12-14

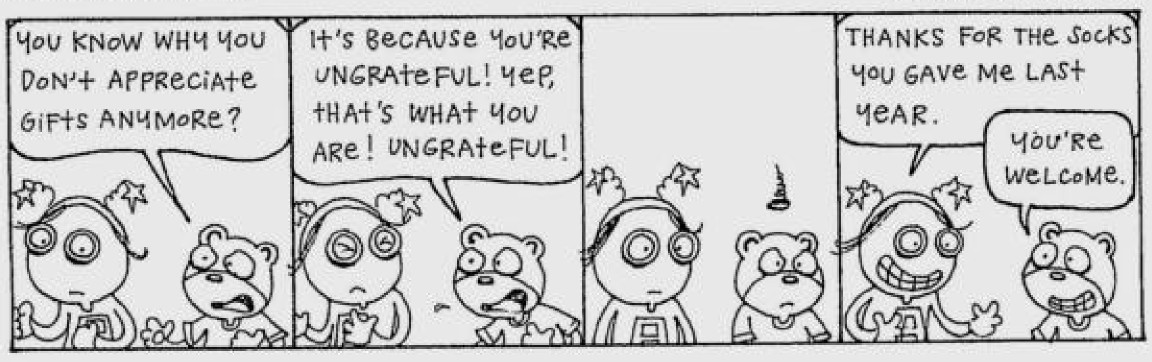
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


HINDI NA MATUTULOY ANG PAKULONG CON-ASS NG MGA CONGRESSMEN...
DAHIL SA BALITANG BAKA MAG PEOPLE POWER!!! BALITA PA LANG YUN, HA, PERO, UMURONG NA ANG CONG-ASS!!
BALITA POWER!!!
CHIONGLO

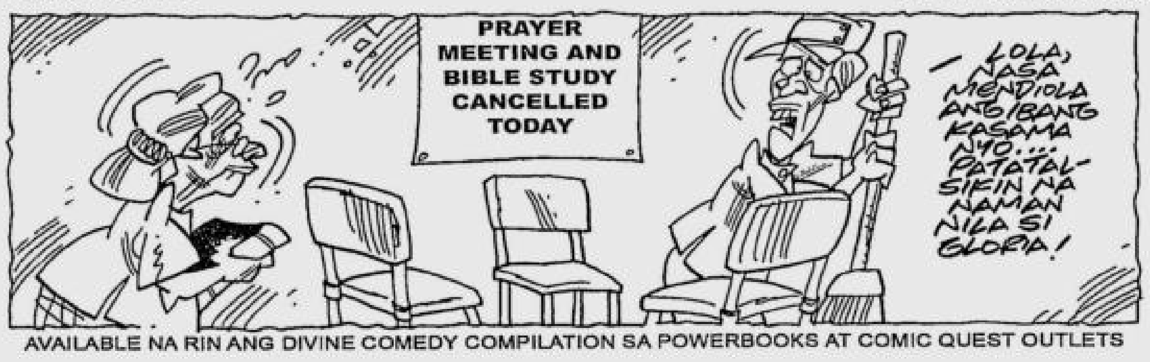
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


YOU KNOW WHY YOU DON'T APPRECIATE GIFTS ANYMORE?
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE UNGRATEFUL! YEP, THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE! UNGRATEFUL!
THANKS FOR THE SOCKS YOU GAVE ME LAST YEAR.
YOU'RE WELCOME.

DIVINE COMEDY

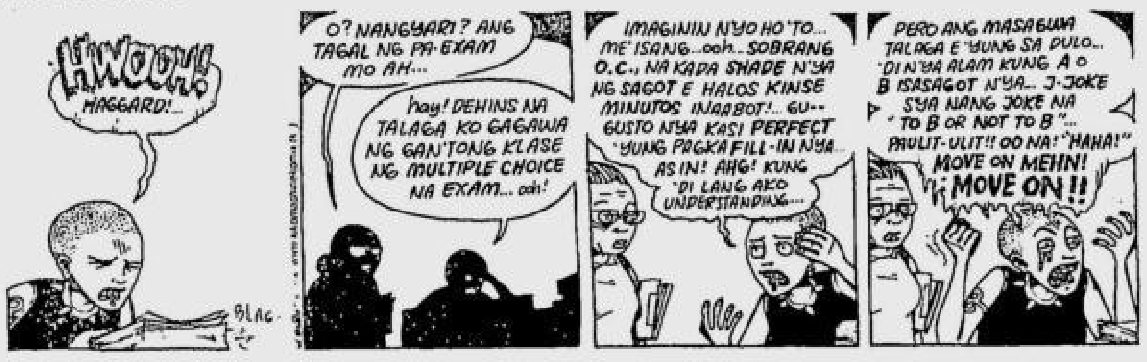
BY STEVEN PABALINAS


PRAYER MEETING AND BIBLE STUDY CANCELLED TODAY
— LOLA, NASA MENDIOLA ANG IBANG KASAMA NYO... PATATAL-SIKIN NA NAMAN NILA SI GLORIA!

AVAILABLE NA RIN ANG DIVINE COMEDY COMPILATION SA POWERBOOKS AT COMIC QUEST OUTLETS

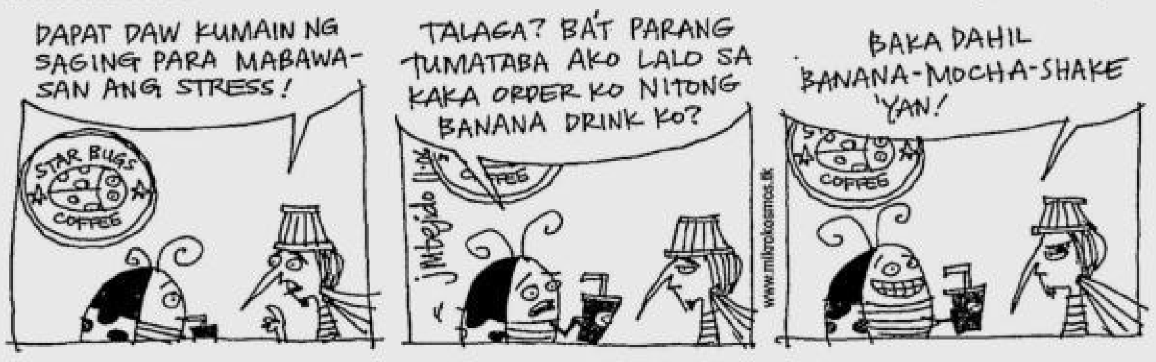
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


HWOOH! HAGGARD!...
O? NANGYARI? ANG TAGAL NG PA-EXAM MO AH...
hay! DEHINS NA TALAGA KO GAGAWA NG GAN'TONG KLASE NG MULTIPLE CHOICE NA EXAM... ooh!
IMAGININ N'YO HO 'TO... ME' ISANG... ooh... SOBRANG O.C., NA KADA SHADE N'YA NG SAGOT E HALOS KINSE MINUTOS INAABOT!... GU-- GUSTO N'YA KASI PERFECT 'YUNG PAGKA FILL-IN N'YA... AS IN! AHG! KUNG 'DI LANG AKO UNDERSTANDING...
PERO ANG MASAGWA TALAGA E 'YUNG SA DULO... 'DI N'YA ALAM KUNG A O B ISASAGOT N'YA... J-JOKE SYA NANG JOKE NA "TO B OR NOT TO B"... PAULIT-ULIT!! OO NA! "HAHA!"
MOVE ON MEHN! MOVE ON!!

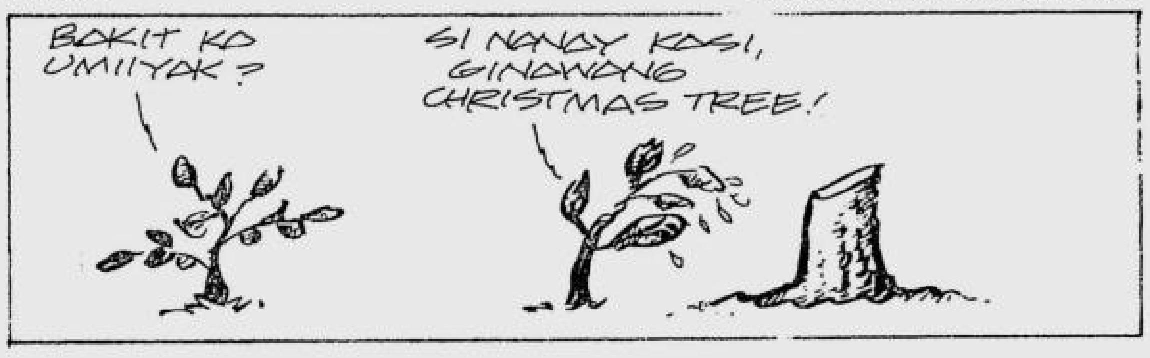
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


DAPAT DAW KUMAIN NG SAGING PARA MABAWA-SAN ANG STRESS!
STAR BUGS COFFEE
TALAGA? BA'T PARANG TUMATABA AKO LALO SA KAKA ORDER KO NITONG BANANA DRINK KO?
jmtejido
BAKA DAHIL BANANA-MOCHA-SHAKE 'YAN!
www.mikrokosmos.tk

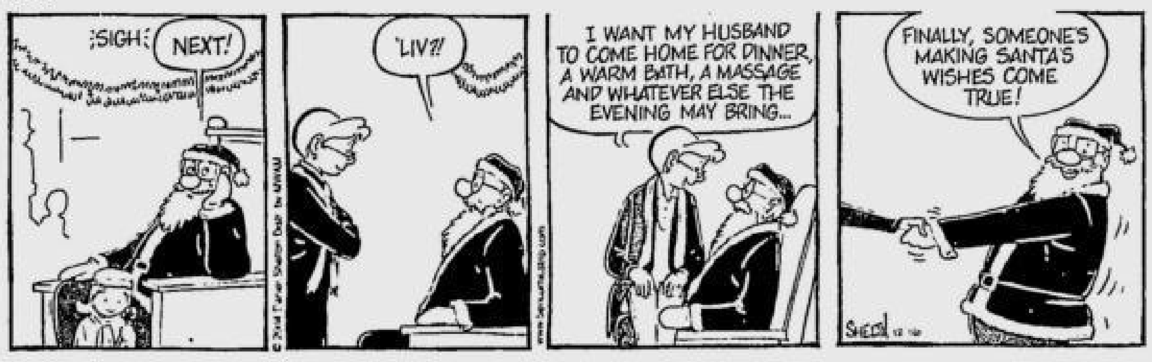
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


BAKIT KA UMIIYAK?
SI NANAY KASI, GINAWANG CHRISTMAS TREE!

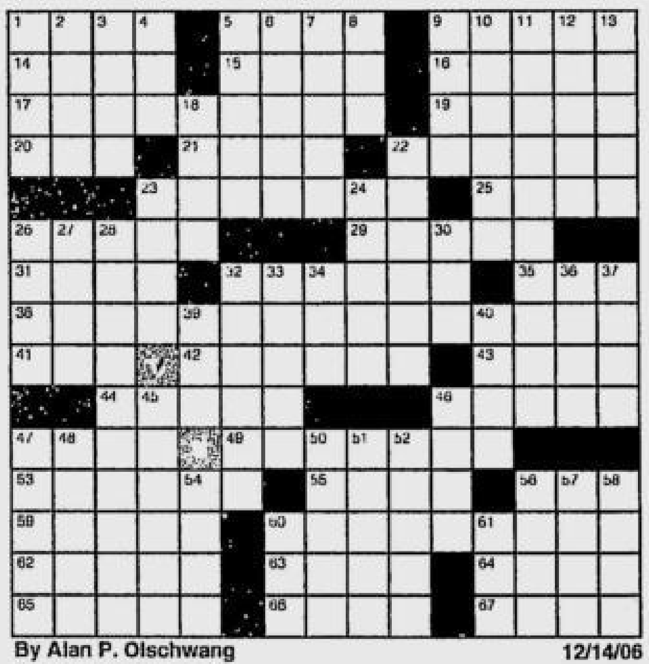
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


:SIGH:
NEXT!
'LIV?!'
I WANT MY HUSBAND TO COME HOME FOR DINNER, A WARM BATH, A MASSAGE AND WHATEVER ELSE THE EVENING MAY BRING...
FINALLY, SOMEONE'S MAKING SANTA'S WISHES COME TRUE!

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Approved, for short
5 Sotto __
9 Former Turkish title
14 Boffo review
15 Confess
16 Pot builders
17 Start of Henri Bergson quote
19 Fatuous
20 NBC classic
21 Top-flight
22 Female grad
23 Transfixes
25 Part 2 of quote
26 Casing
29 Northern Spy, for one
31 Abode of buzzers
32 Orchestra instruments
35 Scot Roy
38 Part 3 of quote
41 Black gold
42 Set among
43 Concerning
44 Accepted practice
46 "Viva Las __"
47 Part 4 of quote
49 Broke out
53 Type of balloon
55 Without ice
56 Galena or mispickel
59 Kuwaiti rulers
60 End of quote
62 Soap substitute
63 Aloha in Roma
64 Guilty or not guilty
65 Saint-Saens' "__ macabre"
66 Supporting shaft
67 Prepare for posting



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA

12/14/06

DOWN
1 Table scraps
2 Madeline of "Blazing Saddles"
3 Satan's realm
4 Lair
5 Heroism
6 Sheeplike
7 Pepsi alternatives
8 One of the flock
9 Beach toy
10 Yearly
11 Speaking with involuntary pauses
12 Salon dye
13 Free-trade org. based in Jakarta
18 Maiden or Marx
22 Countenance
23 Actor Baldwin
24 Crimean resident
26 Get lost!
27 LP player
28 Rating
30 L.A. hrs.
32 Pinky or pointer
33 Defeated rival
34 Aries article
36 Gumbo ingredient
37 Spellers' contests
39 Toledo aunt
40 Prevaricated
45 Tangles
46 Presidential blackball
47 Leading
48 Mell Lazarus comic strip
50 Detach
51 Flower part
52 Western resort lake
54 Words of understanding
56 Eye on the sly
57 Saturn satellite
58 Relative of etc.
60 Andes tuber
61 FedEx rival

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

P	I	E	T	A	■	L	A	M	P	■	S	L	A	G
A	S	C	O	T	■	A	S	E	A	■	C	O	L	A
C	L	O	T	H	E	S	A	N	D	H	O	B	B	Y
K	E	N	■	W	A	S	P	■	■	E	R	O	S	E
■	■	■	G	A	R	■	■	C	O	R	E	■	■	■
■	C	H	A	R	L	I	E	A	N	D	S	A	W	■
A	L	E	U	T	■	N	A	V	E	S	■	G	I	L
R	A	I	L	■	F	U	R	O	R	■	B	O	D	Y
I	N	D	■	S	O	R	E	R	■	P	A	R	E	E
■	G	I	F	T	A	N	D	T	R	O	J	A	N	■
■	■	■	R	A	M	S	■	■	U	M	A	■	■	■
A	S	T	I	R	■	■	A	P	I	A	■	C	P	O
S	T	A	L	K	I	N	G	A	N	D	D	A	R	K
T	A	L	L	■	M	A	R	S	■	E	R	R	O	R
A	R	K	S	■	P	E	A	T	■	S	E	L	M	A

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12/14/06

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: Above all, you're innovative and original. You're not afraid to stand up and be counted. You always speak your own truth. Your private life is quite unorthodox, and sometimes you make it public! You yourself are aware that you're highly individualistic. At times, you're rebellious. Good news: The year ahead might be one of the best years of your life!

Birthdate of: Tata Young, Thai-American pop singer; Dee Wallace-Stone, actress; Michael Owen, soccer player.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Travel plans and anything having to do with education will go very well now. These areas of your life are blessed. Grab any opportunity to travel or go to school. Expand your world!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Continue to focus on how to properly share jointly held property. You're totally focused on responsibilities to others now.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Five planets are directly opposite your sign. This focuses your attention on partnerships and close friendships. You can definitely learn more about yourself through your one-on-one relationships.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Since you have a lot of energy to work hard now, accomplish as much as you can. Coworkers are inspired by your example. This is good.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Love affairs, romance, the arts, vacations, professional sports and working with children are tops on your menu right now. This is a good time to have fun and enjoy yourself!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Home, family and real estate matters continue to be a primary focus for you at this time. Entertain at home. It's also a good time for redecorating and renovations.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You're busier than a one-armed paperhanger. You've got things to do, people to see, places to go. Short trips and errands keep you hopping.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): At this point in your life, you're trying to figure out what matters. You don't want to be 90 years old, looking in the mirror and saying to yourself, "You blew it."

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Five planets are in your sign. This enormously energizes you. It also attracts people and opportunities your way. Make the most of this while you can.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You need to have more solitude right now. Life is about to get busier, so try to get all the rest that you can. Work alone or work behind the scenes.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Friendships are important to you now. Enjoy time spent with pals and groups. Talk to others about your goals and dreams for the future.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Six planets are at high noon in your chart. People definitely notice you now, because these planets act like a spotlight on you. (Buy new shoes.)

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

		4	7	3	6	1		
	2	3				8	4	
	7			9			5	
	6		8		7		9	
	9			4			8	
	1	6				2	3	
		7	1	5	8	4		

Difficulty Level ★★★

12/14

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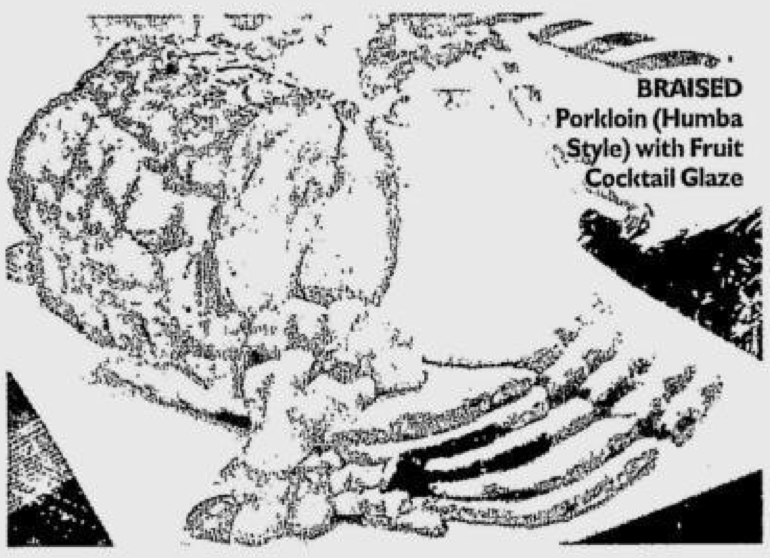
HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

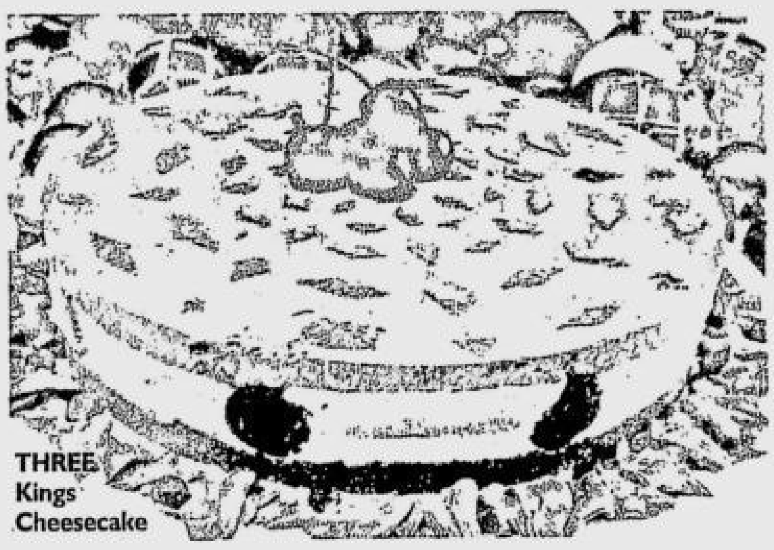
Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

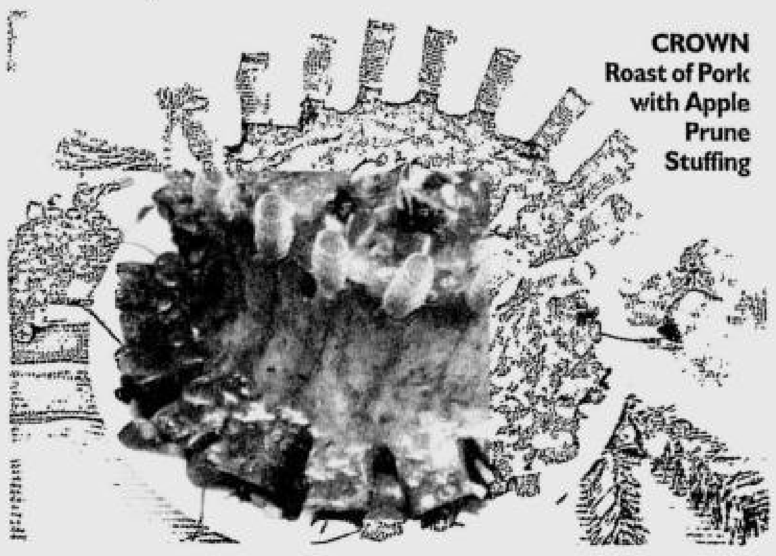
Answer to previous puzzle

4	7	9	6	8	5	1	2	3
3	5	8	1	7	2	4	9	6
2	1	6	9	4	3	7	8	5
7	6	4	5	1	9	2	3	8
9	3	5	8	2	7	6	4	1
8	2	1	3	6	4	5	7	9
6	4	3	2	5	8	9	1	7
5	8	2	7	9	1	3	6	4
1	9	7	4	3	6	8	5	2

Difficulty Level ★★★


BRAISED Porkloin (Humba Style) with Fruit Cocktail Glaze


THREE Kings Cheesecake


CROWN Roast of Pork with Apple Prune Stuffing

Merry new menu for Noche Buena

THIS CHRISTMAS, ADD A FEW NEW items to the traditional Noche Buena.

Here are some recipes from San Miguel Pure Foods Company Inc., which is marking the 50th year of the Purefoods brand.

Crown Roast of Pork with Apple Prune Stuffing

1 whole Monterey Crown Roast of Pork (with 16 ribs)

Rub:
2 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper
1 c Magnolia Best Fruits Pink Guava Jam
1 tbsp dried thyme
1 tbsp mustard
1 tbsp brown sugar

Stuffing:
1 c Magnolia Best Fruits Apple Cinnamon Jam
2 c coarsely chopped apples
½ c chopped celery
1 c chopped pitted prunes
½ c chopped walnuts
2 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper

Gravy:
Meat drippings
1/3 c all-purpose flour
3 c apple juice (store-bought)
1 tsp Worcestershire sauce

Garnish:
Lettuce leaves (assorted)
Red and green apple slices

Combine all rub ingredients and use all over the crown roast. Set aside. In a bowl, combine all stuffing ingredients and mix well. Scoop mixture onto crown roast. Cover stuffing with foil and bake at 350°F or 175°C for two hours and 15 minutes or until done (when meat is punctured with a fork, the juice is clear). Save drippings.

To prepare the gravy, mix flour with pan drippings. Add apple juice and Worcestershire sauce. Put in a saucepan and cook until it thickens. Transfer into a sauceboat. Transfer crown roast to a serving platter lined with assorted lettuce. Decorate with apple slices. Put foil frills on each rib. Makes 16 servings.

Three Kings Cheesecake

Crust:
1¼ c graham cracker crumbs
1/3 c Bakers' Best Margarine, melted
2 tbsp sugar

Filling:
1 c all-purpose cream, chilled
1 c Magnolia Cream Cheese, softened
¼ c sugar
1 tbsp unflavored gelatin
3 tbsp Magnolia Fresh Milk
¼ c bittersweet chocolate, melted
1 tbsp San Mig Coffee Strong, dissolved in ¼ c water
Cocoa powder for dusting

Line the bottom of an 8" ring mold with Glad foil and set aside. For the crust, combine all ingredients and press mixture at the bottom of the prepared ring mold. Chill and set aside.

To prepare the filling, whip all-purpose cream until stiff peak stage. Chill and set aside. Beat cream cheese and sugar until light and well blended. Add whipped cream and mix until smooth. Dissolve gelatin in milk and melt over a double boiler.

Pour gelatin over cream cheese mixture and mix well. Divide mixture into three, pour the first part over prepared crust and level off. Flavor the other part with coffee and the remaining part with melted chocolate. Pour the coffee-flavored cream cheese mixture over the first layer and level off. Put chocolate mixture on top and level it off again. Chill in the refrigerator for at least an hour.

To remove from mold, take off foil underneath and transfer cake onto a round plate. Warm sides of mold with a warm towel and carefully lift mold. Dust top of cake with cocoa powder and garnish with three pieces of cherries with stem. Makes 8-12 servings.

Braised Porkloin (Humba Style) with Fruit Cocktail Glaze

1 pc Monterey Rolled Boneless Porkloin (1.5 k)
½ c Purefoods Supremo Vinegar
2 c water
1 tsbp minced garlic
2 tbsps brown sugar
10 pcs peppercorns, crushed
¼ c soy sauce
1 pc bay leaf
2 tbsp black beans
Banana blossoms
Salt
1, 450 g fruit cocktail, drained
1 cut fruit cocktail syrup

Place porkloin into the pot. Add vinegar, 2 c water, garlic, sugar, peppercorns, soy sauce, bay leaf and black beans. Boil mixture until pork loin is tender. Correct seasoning with salt. Banana blossoms may be added, if desired. Remove meat and add 1 c syrup to the sauce. Allow to reduce and slightly thicken. Once thick, strain liquid and add drained fruit cocktail. Remove strings from pork loin and slice thinly. Top with fruit cocktail glaze. Makes six servings.

(Recipe from the Philippine Cuisine Cookbook)

Bibingcup

1 pack Magnolia Pancake Plus (Maple)
¾ c coconut cream
¼ c bacon, chopped and rendered (save oil)
Banana leaf
Dari Crème Classic

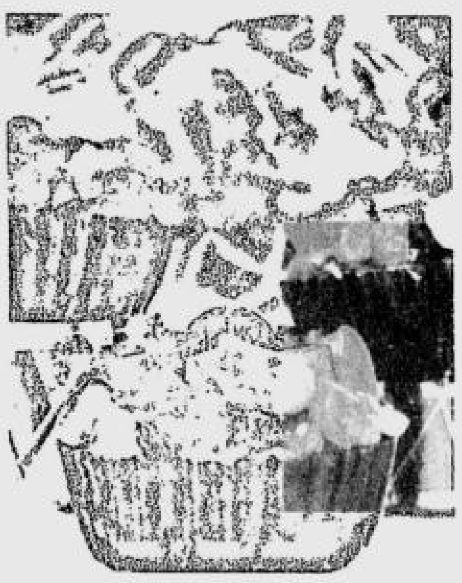
In a bowl, combine pancake mix and coconut cream. Mix until smooth. Add half of the bacon bits and slightly mix. Pour into metal *puto* mold lined with banana leaves. Brush with oil from rendered bacon. Pour pancake mix in each mold and top with bacon bits. Cook in oven toaster for at least 10 minutes or until done. Serve warm and top with Dari Crème.

Makes 8-10 pieces.

Bejeweled Cupcakes

775 g glazed fruits
175 g Magnolia Gold Butter
1 c *muscovado* sugar
1 c peanut butter (good quality)
½ c Tondeña Rum
Juice and zest of 1 lemon
zest of 1 lemon
3 pcs eggs
2 c + 2 tbsp all-purpose flour
½ tsp baking powder
¼ tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp ground cloves
¼ tsp ground nutmeg

Topping:
4 tbsp Best Fruits Pineapple Jam
1 c glazed fruits
½ c walnuts, roasted and coarsely chopped for garnishing
8 pcs maraschino cherries with stem, for garnishing



Preheat oven to 300°F. Line muffin tins with muffin papers and set aside. Put glazed fruits, butter, sugar, peanut butter, rum, lemon juice and zests in a saucepan and bring to boil gently, stirring as the butter melts. Simmer for 5 minutes and then take it off the heat and leave to stand for 30 minutes. Add the eggs, sifted flour, baking powder and spices and stir to combine.

Pour mixture ¾ full into prepared muffin tins and bake for 20-25 minutes or until done. Allow to cool. Once cooled, brush each cupcake on top with pineapple jam and decorate with generous amounts of glazed fruit and chopped walnuts. Top each cake with stemmed cherries.

For more Christmas recipes, log on to www.mygreatfood.com

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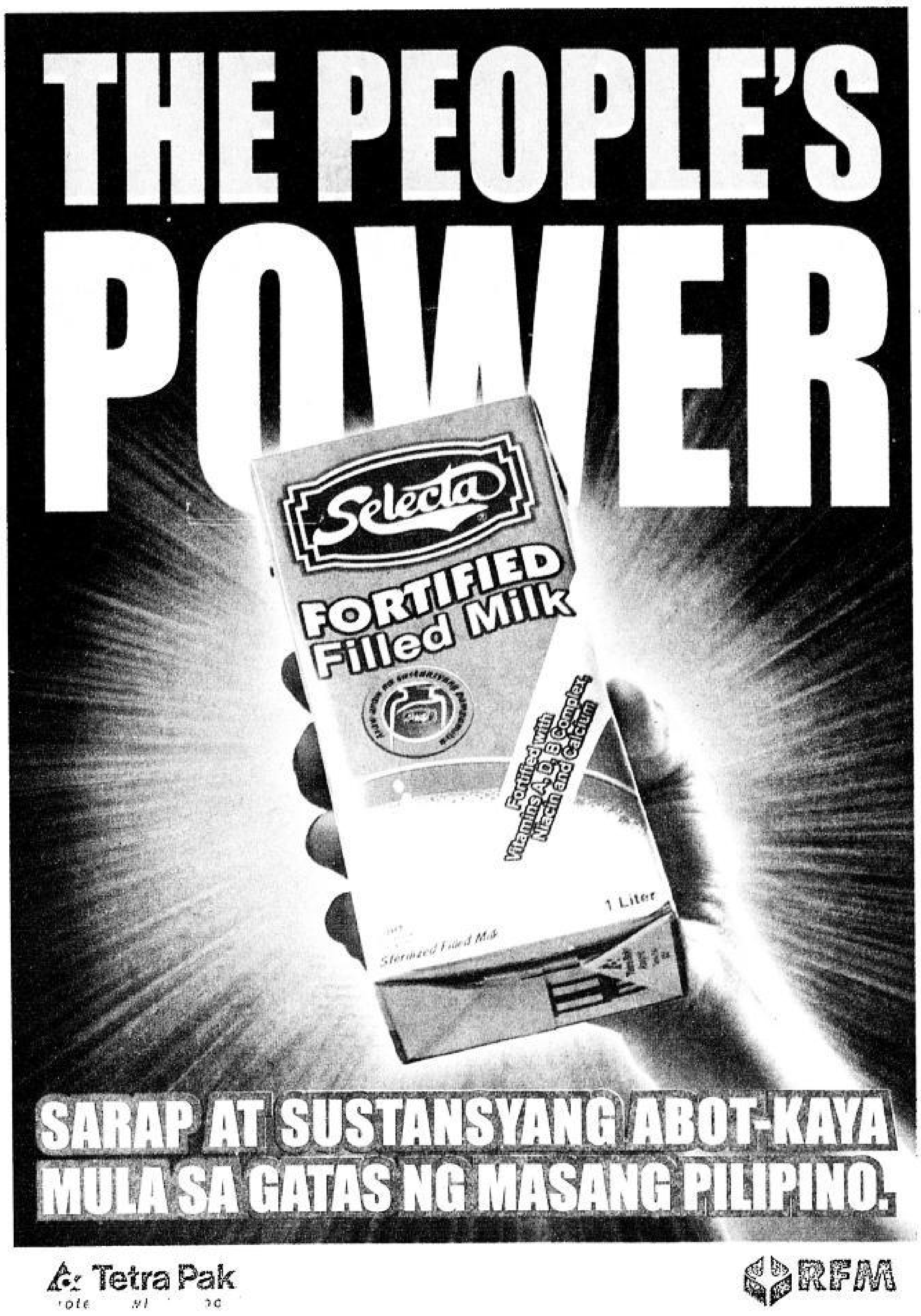
THE PEOPLE'S POWER

Selecta FORTIFIED Filled Milk

SARAP AT SUSTANSYANG ABOT-KAYA MULA SA GATAS NG MASANG PILIPINO.

Tetra Pak

RFM

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

The undiscovered, divine Binallay

From page E1

derivative of the Ibanag word *balay* which means "house," thus referring to the way the rice cake is prepared, "housed" or "sheltered."

Binallay is made of good quality glutinous rice, ground until flour-fine. Only water is added to the white powder, after which the mixture is kneaded then shaped into rectangles. Banana leaves wrap or "house" the *kakanin*, and leaf strips secure the "housing" like a belt.

As the rice cakes boil until tender, their wrapping turns dull green. When done they are drained by hanging them on wires or thin ropes that grace the Ibanag kitchen only during Lent.

It is tricky to prepare *laro* syrup—akin to finding the Holy Grail, and cause enough for an Ibanag to forget that one should abstain from temper flare-ups especially during Eastertide. But decades of practice are no guarantee of top-quality *laro*, and it is a long-held suspicion that some Ibanags just have the gift for making *laro*, and others do not.

Laro is prepared by boiling *gata* (milk from grated coconut meat) until it produces oil. Cups of brown sugar or molasses are mixed into the boiling oil until completely melted. The delicate part is achieving the right consistency, texture and sweetness: the syrup must be almost as red as blood, almost watery and not too sweet. That is because no Ibanag ever eats just one piece: three whole ricecakes in one sitting is common. After all, traditional Ibanag homes serve nothing but Binallay during Holy Week; palates can only break the monotonous menu on Easter Sunday.

As if the preparation were not challenging enough, eating Binallay is a feat in itself. The glutinous rice sticks so well to its wrapper that one has to carefully peel off the leaf in half-inch-wide strips using one's thumb and forefinger.

Once the technique is perfected no cake will be lost to the discarded wrapper. It takes several minutes to bare the delicacy which then has to be set on a plate already spread all over with *laro* to avoid another "stick-up" that, again, would be a waste of the cake itself.

Fortunately elders have found a positive meaning for the challenge that is unwrapping Binallay, noting that the stickiness is symbolic of their people's persevering nature and close kinship.

The final tough part over, one can then take a fork, slice a bite-size piece of the *kakanin*, turn it over and over until the amount of *laro* preferred sticks to it, and then savor that unbelievably unique gustatory treat to make one forget how labor-intensive the recipe is. The Philippines is indeed so fortunate that the Ibanags have given the national cuisine their little known and divinely delicious Binallay con Laro Lenten treat.

This Christmas, keep the tradition alive for children

BE A HOLIDAY ANGEL

Support any of the 4 Ways To Be a Holiday Angel activities

Pictures tell a thousand words; in this case, it's a thousand thank you's!
-Brgy. Simuay Crossing, Cotobato

A group of students get ready to walk back home from the daycare center.
-Brgy. Bangkerohan, Catarman, Northern Samar

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Second grade students hold up their "thank you" letters to Starbucks.
-Brgy. San Isidro, Masbate

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